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THE RIVALS



The Rivals

By

Richard Brinsley Sheridan

With Introduction and Notes by

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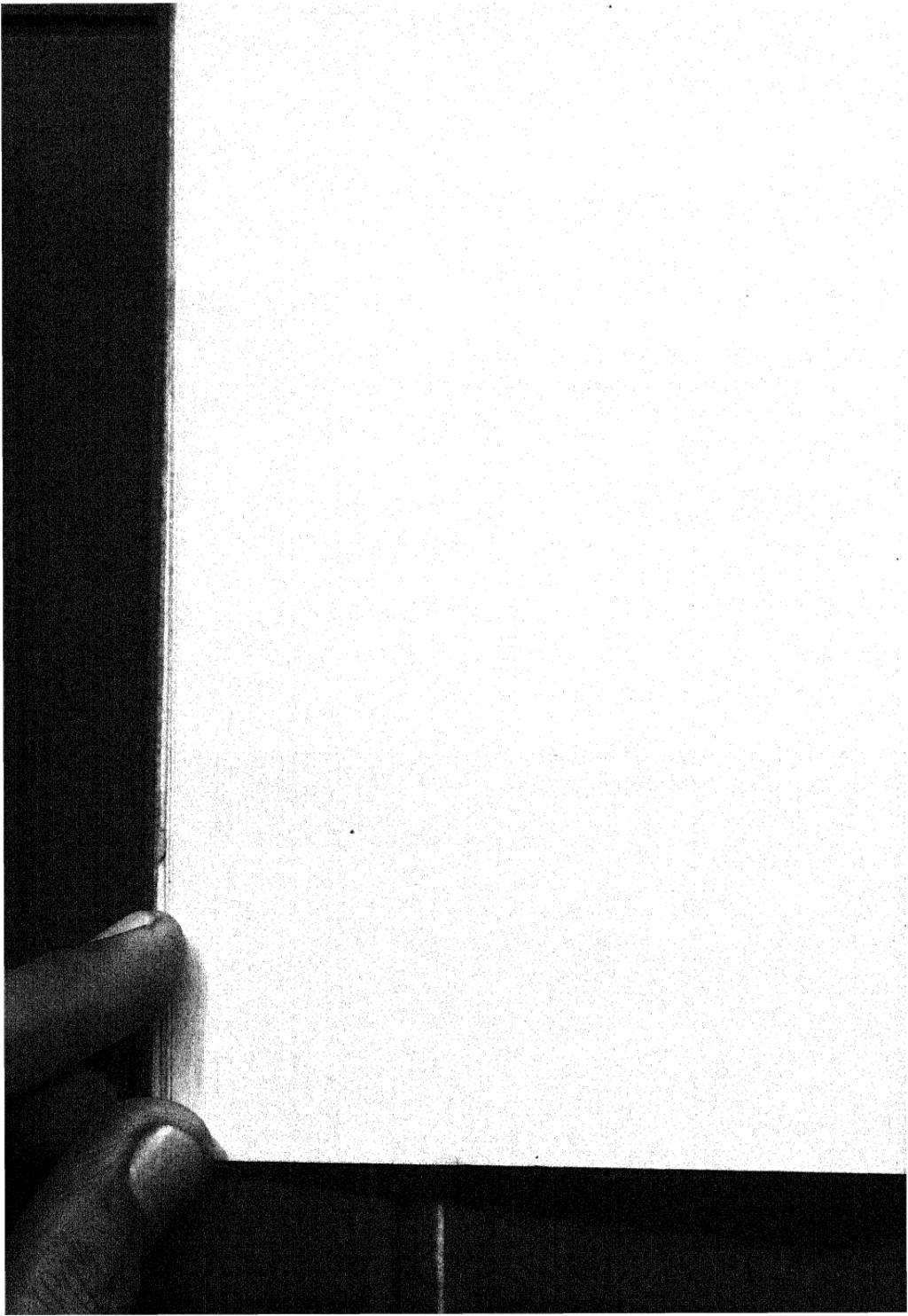
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By E. J. Sullivan

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INTRODUCTION

1. THE LIFE OF SHERIDAN

SHERIDAN won applause in his lifetime, and he wins our admiration now. If he does not win also our affection, it may be because in his youth he received but little himself. His mother, from whom he inherited his literary talent, was the author of *Sidney Biddulph*. She spent much of her time abroad, and died at Blois in 1767, fifteen years after he was born. Of his father, Dr. Johnson remarked, "Sheridan is dull, naturally dull ; but it must have taken him a deal of pains to have become what we now see him. Such an excess of stupidity, sir, is not in nature." So that we can understand why the son's relations with him are described as being "more respectful and attentive than close and cordial." Three years after his mother's death, Sheridan left Harrow and was living at Bath, where his father, who had previously had some success as an actor, was teaching oratory. Here he was acquainted with Elizabeth Ann Linley, the daughter of a singing-master. His brother, Charles, was in love with her, but when her father pressed her to marry an elderly, but rich, man and she was also embarrassed by the attentions of a rake, it was to Sheridan that she turned for help. He responded, taking her, in March 1772, to Lille. He was not in love with her then, but this followed, and though they had gone through some sort of service at Calais, they were married with full parental permission on 13th April, 1773. Meanwhile, the rake, one Matthews, had been libelling Sheridan in the Bath papers, and Sheridan accordingly fought two duels, in the second of which he was seriously wounded.

He then moved to London, and while he was studying law at the Middle Temple, his wife sang in oratorio. Mrs. Sheridan has been celebrated, in some of the worst verses ever written, by Miles Peters Andrews :

We can boast of one other beside
Who's a mistress of harmony, too ;
She's good-tempered and void of all pride,
The whole family's equally so.

She was popular, further, with others, who wielded a better pen. Fanny Burney noted in her *Diary* that "the elegance of Mrs. Sheridan's beauty is unequalled by any I ever saw, except Mrs. Crewe," and Horace Walpole, who bobs up in eighteenth-century reminiscence like a crab-apple in a gossip's bowl, recounts that George III "ogles her as much as he dare do in so holy a place as an Oratorio."

A year after his marriage, *The Rivals* was written and produced at Covent Garden in the beginning of 1775. The ultimate success of this play led Sheridan to turn his attention to the stage, and he at once set to work on the light opera which Byron has so extravagantly praised, *The Duenna*, to which his father-in-law wrote the music. This was produced in November of the same year and was a great success, being acted for seventy-five nights during the season. Sheridan's father, who had quarrelled with him, was now acting at Drury Lane, but went to see his son's work at Covent Garden, where Sheridan saw him, but dared not speak. At this time, it must be remembered, Sheridan was not much more than twenty-three ; after behaving in a reckless manner, plunging into an early marriage with no means of support, he was now the most talked-of dramatist of the hour. By June of the next year, he had bought Garrick's share in Drury Lane ; so the son owned part of the theatre where his father, a year back, had been employed. In 1777, he produced there *The School for Scandal*, his masterpiece, and very nearly the masterpiece of English comedy. This was not the first work in which he

had himself a hand that he produced at his house. In February he had put on a version of Vanbrugh's first play, *The Relapse*, but all the time he had been working with care on the play that was to come. Two years later was produced his burlesque, *The Critic*. This was his last original play, though he translated a piece by Kotzebue, *Pizarro*. At the age of twenty-nine, he ended his career as a playwright, and became, in 1780, member of Parliament for Stafford. He lived till he was sixty-five; but less than half that number of years had been sufficient for him to earn his place as the foremost writer of English artificial comedy, while of the political work which filled his later years, little but report remains. His speeches won a great reputation, but we have no versions of them that have any pretensions to accuracy or fullness. The most famous of all, that on the Begums, delivered during the impeachment of Hastings, was said to have lasted five and a half hours. There is no known reason why Sheridan so early abandoned dramatic authorship. It may be that having exhausted his literary talent, he turned to his father's inheritance and enjoyed the glamour of public appearance, preferring to gain the applause for his own delivery of what he had himself written. But the fact remains, as Mr. Iolo Williams says, in his important, exhaustive and reliable edition, "It is sad that Sheridan, after writing one of the greatest comedies, should have come down to being satisfied with writing a good joke: it is still sadder that after that he should have been satisfied (so far as the drama was concerned) with writing nothing at all."

It must be remembered, however, that Sheridan was the most successful, the most talked-of, the most conspicuous young man of his time. He set a fashion in the theatre as another young man has done in our own day, and like that young man, he was looked up to by younger, who saw more vividly than we can now the glamour of romance that hung round him.

2. THE RIVALS : ITS ORIGINS AND HISTORY

It may be that Sheridan was not, fundamentally, creative. Three years produced all his plays, and his need for imaginative expression seems then to have been satisfied. It seems likely that Sheridan realised that his genius was more constructive than creative.

Certainly critics have not failed to point out the extensive borrowings in his plays, and as he not very convincingly excused himself in the preface to *The Rivals*, "Faded ideas float in the fancy like half-forgotten dreams ; and the imagination in its fullest enjoyments becomes suspicious of its offspring and doubts whether it has created or adopted." An author with the restless, driving urge, it may be thought, would not have said this ; he would have taken up the challenge and declared that all is fit material that comes into his mind, and that the imagination then transmutes it beyond either recognition or acknowledgment. But Sheridan, having tried, and having succeeded, knew when he had no more to say, and rather than go on "adopting" others' ideas, turned to the field of oratory, where this was a test of strength rather than a confession of weakness.

His own life provided the material for *The Rivals*, just as his own residence at Bath provided the background. But we must be chary of accepting as true all the sources that have been suggested for this play. He was only twenty-three when he wrote it, and his reading must have been truly remarkable, had he read as extensively as the "borrowings" attributed to him would imply.

The most famous character of all, Mrs. Malaprop, has been identified with Mrs. Slipslop in Fielding's *Joseph Andrews*, with Tabitha Bramble in Smollett's *Humphrey Clinker*, and with Mrs. Heidelberg in *The Clandestine Marriage*. We may take which we like of these, remembering that as with Shakespeare's Dogberry, who has also been brought in as a forerunner, that the chief, and in most cases only, resemblance between these

persons and Lydia's aunt is their habit of misusing words. It would be hard indeed to create a character that has not had some counterpart in literature, and, since mankind has not essentially altered down the ages, it might be more original than lifelike. One character, however, certainly influenced the young Sheridan, and that was Mrs. Tryfort in his mother's play, *A Journey to Bath*. Several of her mistakes appear with no change in *The Rivals*.

Lydia Languish, again, has been likened to Colman's Polly Honeycombe, because both, like many girls, were romantic, and read novels. Steele's *Tender Husband* has a similar figure in Biddy Tipkin, with whom Sheridan was possibly familiar, and he may have taken the name from Lydia Bramble in *Humphrey Clinker*; she had "a languishing eye and read romances." The Faulkland-Julia device occurs also in *The Nut-Brown Maid* and in *Peregrine Pickle*, but whilst these comparisons suggest themselves, it would be rash to say that Sheridan must have copied. And even if none of his characters were his own, as is too rashly implied, we should have all the more reason for admiring a young man who, at twenty-three, was sufficiently well acquainted with the works of Molière, Fielding, Smollett, Congreve, Prior, Garrick, Shakespeare, Chapman, and Vanbrugh, to mould them to his own uses.

The play was first produced at Covent Garden on the 17th January, 1775. Owing to its excessive length, and to the weakness of Lee in the part of Sir Lucius O'Trigger, it was a failure, and was withdrawn. On the 28th, it was again put on, with Clinch taking Lee's part and with considerable cuts. It is commonly thought that the shortened scenes were those of Faulkland and Julia, which now are usually abridged or omitted altogether. The piece then became a great success, and on the tenth night Sheridan was emboldened to put in a new prologue, ridiculing the Sentimental Muse and giving his own opinions of comedy. With the exception of Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*, produced two years before, nothing like it had been seen since the Restoration; and it is these two plays

that are popularly supposed to have caused the downfall of "sentimental comedy," some knowledge of which is essential to any understanding of the Georgian stage.

3. DRAMA IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Drury Lane and Covent Garden were the only theatres at which the spoken drama, which hence came to be called "the legitimate," could legally be presented. Other houses could only offer musical entertainments, burlettas or spectacular displays. The two theatres, therefore, were the sole ones at which a play could be performed as it was written; but when, in 1792, Covent Garden was rebuilt, and Drury Lane, following two years later, was enlarged to hold 500 more, even this encouragement to the author was gone. Niceties of acting were lost, and spectacle, horsemanship and aquatics had to be called in to make it pay. These theatres had been enlarged to meet the increased demand by the lower classes, but the aristocracy kept away, frequenting instead the Italian opera at the King's theatre in the Haymarket. Plays thus had, by means of broad strokes and straightforward humour, to please the rabble, whose dictatorship is amply proved by the famous O.P. riots at Covent Garden in 1809. The mob resented an increased charge of sixpence in the pit, and insisted on the Old Prices. Rioting, largely owing to Kemble's tactlessness, lasted sixty-one nights, the actors being driven from the stage and snuff and sparrows let loose among the audience. Finally, there was a truce and the old prices were restored.

The popular style of acting was another encumbrance to the author. It was useless for a man to write any really original dialogue when he knew the stereotyped delivery would make it sound worse than conventional hack-work. Cumberland, in his memoirs, observes that "Quin . . . with very little variation of cadence and in deep full tone, accompanied by a sawing kind of action which had more of the senate than of the stage in it, rolled out his heroics with an air of dignified

indifference," while Mrs. Cibber's voice, " though it did not wound the ear, wearied it."

But Garrick was "alive in every muscle and every feature," and destroyed "the illusion of imposing declamation." He changed the conventional declamation into an easier and more expressive style. In 1762, moreover, he rid the stage of all people but the actors—a great advance—and in 1765 instituted footlights. Dress was very sumptuous, it being customary for nobles to give their clothes to actors. Thus Queen Adelaide gave her coronation dress, and Betterton had Charles II's robes.

The reader seeking to trace from the plays of the late eighteenth century the dramatic trend of the period, will constantly find himself confronted with the term "sentimental comedy." He may think he knows what this means; but as he goes on, through essay and epilogue, he will become aware that the phrase has an importance larger than he at first thought. It comes up again and again, with a meaning over and above the separate meanings of the two words, "sentimental" and "comedy," and it is useless going on with one's study of the drama unless one is quite sure what this meaning is.

Towards the end of the century there set in many changes in social life. "Social and economic conditions were moving in the direction of a change greater than any since the break-up of the Middle Ages." The early and middle decades had been periods of prosperity, but the general improvement of life in those years was hampered by the need for economy that marked the century's turn. Thus the most influential grade in society was ceasing to be the aristocracy, their place being taken by the middle classes, who had risen during the earlier period. These brought to their new position all their heavy and slightly hypocritical qualities which the older aristocracy was too weak to repudiate and too impoverished to refine. This change may be summed up by saying that manners relaxed while morals became more severe. All of this had its effect on the drama, and the result was "sentimental comedy."

The pseudo-classical spirit of the age had, by the late eighteenth century, destroyed serious drama, and the changing type of audience, middle-class, squeamish, but unrefined, had no taste for the old comedies of manners. They preferred farce, but at the same time they had a horror of anything that was "low." They could enjoy the "mots" of Congreve but they would not endure his morals. In fact, though folly and vice might be represented, their inevitable consequences could not be put upon the stage. Some redeeming trait had to be made manifest in the last act, some piece of mock modesty had to triumph.

This, coinciding with the early struggling for expression of romanticism, led to comedy becoming watered down and sentimentalised. Prevailing conditions being uncongenial to creative work of the first order, dramatists found it easier to ransack the Elizabethans and Carolines for plays which they could adapt. Jonson, Shirley, Beaumont and Fletcher, above all Shakespeare, in his romantic comedies, were all popular once they had been altered to suit the false morality of the time. It must be remembered that the French Revolution was in the air, and that in the year *She Stoops to Conquer* was produced (1773) the American War of Independence began. People's nerves were on edge and their minds were hazy : they did not wish to face any facts they disliked ; they wanted to alter them, if they could, and dream about them in a softer light. Clarity of thought gave way to a misty emotionalism, and eyes brimmed with tears that had once glanced mockingly from behind fans. Comedy lost its sharp edge and became sentimental ; and sentimental comedy reigned supreme through the work of such writers as Cumberland, Kelly and Reynolds. It became evident that, if this tendency were allowed to go too far, the spirit of laughter would be entirely crushed out. Goldsmith and Sheridan, though they led the attack, were neither alone nor first : many writers raised voice against the tyranny, and the two greater dramatists merely stood out by reason of the superiority of their gifts.

In 1759, Goldsmith had attacked the sentimental dramatists in *The Present State of Polite Learning*, and nine years later he put his theories into practice with his first comedy.

4. *THE RIVALS* : ACTION AND CONSTRUCTION

In the first scene, servants meeting by accident, announce the arrival in Bath of the principal characters. Within the first fifty lines of dialogue we are let into the secret of the title—that Captain Absolute and his “rival,” Ensign Beverley, are the same person. Absolute, heir to Sir Anthony with his £3000 a year, is in love with Lydia Languish, whose friend, Julia Melville, is Sir Anthony’s ward. Lydia herself is very rich, but she is so “romantic” that Absolute is forced to woo her in the guise of a penniless ensign. We learn from the servants that there is “an old tough aunt” in the way.

The second scene of this act reveals Lydia, who, as part of her romantic dreaming, has quarrelled with Beverley but has not had time to make it up before her aunt, Mrs. Malaprop, warns her of the coming of Sir Anthony. Having intercepted a letter between Lydia and “Beverley,” Mrs. Malaprop has decided that her niece shall wed Sir Anthony’s son. The maid, Lucy, is shown as a go-between, who picks up money by taking messages, which she betrays. Mrs. Malaprop is herself in love with an Irish baronet, Sir Lucius O’Trigger, who writes letters which he thinks Lucy delivers to Lydia. Julia arrives; there is a contrast between her love affair and Lydia’s, and the latter tells how she is pestered by the attentions of Bob Acres.

Lydia’s discomfiture at Sir Anthony’s arrival is balanced in the second act by Absolute’s dismay at the same cause. His friend, Faulkland, learns from Acres that his mistress, Julia, is in Bath. These two serve as a foil throughout to Absolute and Lydia. Sir Anthony tells his son of his plans for marrying him, but withholds the lady’s name. Absolute, true to Lydia, recoils. Sir Lucius appears.

The action now begins to unwind. Absolute learns in the third act that the bride intended for him is none other than Lydia. He meets Mrs. Malaprop, and is introduced in his right person, but assures her that he is really Beverley and only passing himself off as Captain Absolute. Sir Lucius tells Acres to challenge his rival Beverley, and himself plans to challenge Absolute, whom he does not know.

Acres accordingly, in the next act, gives Absolute the challenge to give Beverley. Sir Anthony takes his son to meet Lydia, who is amazed at her "Ensign" passing himself off on the father as Captain Absolute. The deception is discovered, and she will have no more to do with him. Lucius challenges Absolute, who in his gloomy mood confides in Faulkland. This again is repeated by Lydia turning to Julia for consolation, at the beginning of the fifth act. Both Mrs. Malaprop and Sir Anthony learn of the duel, Faulkland is mistaken for the missing Beverley, and the others arrive just as Absolute is drawing in reply to Sir Lucius. The Irishman discovers that Lucy has been taking his letters not to Lydia but to Mrs. Malaprop, a quarter in which he could have no rivals. He tries to hand over the aunt to everyone in turn; their refusal forms her punishment, and all ends well, even Julia and Faulkland making up their quarrel.

An interesting feature of the construction is the use of servants to introduce characters, to bear messages, and to serve as a chorus by their gossip. The characters learn of much of the action from them, and they have the effect of heightening the dramatic interest. Much may be learnt from a study of the way in which these servants' scenes are interposed. Lydia and Absolute each have a servant who brings them important news, and both are afraid of their respective guardians, Mrs. Malaprop and Sir Anthony.

Acres, another suitor for Lydia, links on to Absolute and Faulkland by way of Julia, and Sir Lucius of this group in turn links on to Lydia's household through Mrs. Malaprop. Faulkland and Julia throw the main love affair into relief. It will

be noticed that though nothing ever goes wrong with their engagement, they themselves make plenty of troubles, whereas though the way of the other two is seldom smooth, their love is clearly deep and not actually ruffled by any but external troubles. At the same time, Lydia's romanticism is a counterpart to the jealousy of Faulkland.

5. *THE RIVALS* : CHARACTERISATION

One cannot do better than quote Mr. Iolo Williams, who in his introduction to the plays, says, "The great strength of *The Rivals* is that its characters are admirably contrasted and varied, that the plot is skilfully managed, and that (the author being Sheridan) the verbal felicities are many and delightful." But this editor also says that "the characters are abstractions of some comic trait, excellently diverting, but no living people," and this criticism is a little hard. It is true in its way, but it does not go far enough. *The Rivals* is a farce, not a comedy, and is mainly remarkable for the vivid picture it gives of eighteenth-century life; though this may be done by types, the types are given at least as much by characterisation as by "verbal felicities." Lydia is to the life the headstrong girl, her head turned by reading, and this trait is introduced so subtly, so much as if it were only an excuse for what was then a topical laugh, that we are apt to overlook the deeper significance of her passion for the circulating library. Through her, as through Faulkland, Sheridan is having a shrewd hit at two well-known eighteenth-century types. Again, Mrs. Malaprop is so famous for her "nice derangement of epitaphs" that it is seldom noticed how her vulgarity stands out against the courtly refinement of Sir Anthony. Mrs. Malaprop's airs are the direct result of living in Bath. She is the provincial woman desperately trying to live up to the smartness of Bath, and be not too far behind London at the same time. In this, she is allied to Goldsmith's Mrs. Hardcastle, though it must not be thought that yet another model is being suggested for

the original of Lydia's aunt. Sir Anthony himself gives a truly remarkable instance of the breeding that made it possible for his son so to humour the whims of Miss Languish, when no one will take Mrs. Malaprop at the end of the play. Whilst making quite clear that he does not intend to be saddled with her himself, he alone comes to her rescue and tides over the situation with a speech at once charming but definite. "At night," he says, "we single lads will drink a health to the young couples and a husband to Mrs. Malaprop."

The subsidiary lovers have been much criticised and were one of the causes that nearly wrecked the play on its first night. It is true that Faulkland's baseless jealousy becomes wearisome, but Sheridan quite possibly intended them to be tedious, and so show up, among their livelier fellows, as the types of lovers prevailing in sentimental comedy. Whether this was so or not, at least it is not hard for us to regard them as such; and, if they are not taken too seriously, and the absurdity of their quarrels should prevent that, they are, in their very foolishness, amusing.

The dialogue of this play, though lacking the polished sparkle of *The School for Scandal*, is fresh and vigorous, and if it does not linger in the ear for its own sake, goes well with the farcical action. It is, however, for its picture of Bath that *The Rivals* presents most interest now, and some details of the city will help to a fuller appreciation.

6. BATH IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Wars had made foreign travel impossible, and so English people were forced to take their cures and their pleasures in English resorts. Many towns that till then were only provincial centres became linked with London as places for society to show itself, and of these none was more fashionable than Bath.

The grey town, with its wide streets and curved parades, was fortunate alike in its situation and in its mineral pro-

perties. Some waters, discovered in 1758, were opened as The Duke of Kingston's Baths and advertised as "the only Place where Persons of Condition or Delicacy can bathe decently." For this privilege, the Persons had to pay five shillings a time for the use of what was known as The King's Bath. Accordingly, some New Baths were opened where the charge was only one shilling, and these actually became the smarter. In the words of *The New Prose Bath Guide*, published twenty years later, it was found that "those who bathe at the Duke's bath had need possess a little of Her Grace (the Duchess's) Fortune." At the New Baths the water was given as "the Free Gift of God." Beside the waters, there were many pleasant walks and gardens, in one of which, Spring Gardens, a Band played, and public breakfasts were served at half-a-crown a head. The result of these amenities was that, to quote (as is frequently necessary in writing of Bath) the *New Prose Bath Guide*,

"We have seen here, within a few years, a set of People transform a Parcel of wild Fields, and Woods, into a great City";

and again, as the Introduction boasts,

"To the Gay and Youthful of both Sexes, it is a Paradise; to Men in Years, a most comfortable Retreat. To young Ladies it is, in a particular degree, the Place where they have the best Opportunity to improve, and shew their Persons to advantage, as well as to have their prudent Conduct observed; there being no Place in England where they have more Liberty allowed them; and we are happy to observe, that there is not any public Place where that Liberty has been attended with fewer bad Consequences."

The coming of the "set of People" to Bath, which Beau Nash had already made famous, meant that to the natural pleasures, attractions of the town were added. Plays were given on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, and it was observed with complacency in the *Guide*, that "many of the Actors, of both Sexes, are people whose moral characters do them as much credit among their Fellow Citizens in Private

as their Theatrical Talents gain them Applause in Public." It was also recommended that "the Boxes above are most proper for Gentlemen who come booted and spurred, and who are too deeply charged with wine." Balls were fashionable and frequent, and though there is a hint of the Bath of to-day in the rule that "subscription Balls will finish precisely at eleven, even in the middle of a Dance," it has been handed down that "No part of Europe can boast of any Thing equal to a Dressed Ball at the Public Rooms in this City." Circulating libraries existed to beguile what hours remained unwasted. Among these were Shrimpton's, near York House ; Taylor's, in Church Street ; Tennent's, and Bally's, in Milsom Street ; and Bull's, opposite Gyde's Rooms. The part these filled in the life of the time can be gathered from this play.

But above all, as rendezvous in which to be seen, to admire, to discuss, there were the Assembly Rooms. These it is for which Bath is above all famous. Gaming was not allowed to be high ; that had been one of Beau Nash's rules. He himself had lived on the revenue from a gaming house in which he had been a silent partner. The stringent laws passed against gaming in 1745 sounded his death-knell, and though he was given a pension of ten guineas a month by the Corporation (less out of kindness it might seem than in reward for his publicity services), socially he ceased to exist. But many of his rules held good. Ladies thought twice before appearing in the Rooms in an apron, and gentlemen were careful not to wear boots (which seem to have been the objects of Nash's especial fury) on dress occasions. Though we may laugh, this defining of what was and was not done was largely responsible for the raising of Bath to the position it occupied—an eighteenth-century Biarritz—and also to the raising of English life at that period to the most elegant and civilised point it has ever reached.

There were two sets of Rooms. The New Assembly Rooms were opened in 1771. There was considerable rivalry between the inhabitants of the Upper Town and the Lower Town,

which had led to two Masters of Ceremonies, entirely unconnected with each other, being appointed in 1769. The Lower Rooms were managed by Mr. Gyde, and though they were inferior in magnificence to the New Rooms, and had a smaller ball-room, they were said to be lit more softly, which made them as attractive to ladies as did the possession of "a retired walk on the Margin of the River" to stroll in after, to the gentlemen.

With these amusements, the day resolved itself into the following order. Between 6 and 9 a.m. the visitors bathed, following this with an assembly at the Pump House to drink the waters. Then, till dinner, there were the public breakfast, a concert, walks, visits to the libraries. In the afternoon there was the Pump House again, and tea at the Assembly Rooms, and at night balls, concerts, cards. This was the routine, which, honeyed or acidulated o'er with gossip, scandal and tattle, drew smart London at the correct time of the year to a town whose success was so dazzling that it has never got over it to this day ; and though Horace Walpole anticipated the modern verdict by saying, "it does one more good to leave Bath than to go to it," there is plenty of evidence in the writings of Smollett, Miss Burney and Sheridan himself, for the important position it held in English social life in the eighteenth century.

It is perhaps right to add, since even the *Guide* was fair enough to admit so much, that there were two serious drawbacks to the town. One was the bells, which made a great noise and were rung on the least pretext, clappers of twenty-four being pealed when anyone drove in with a set of horses ; and the other was the insanitary condition of the Abbey. This was a common scandal ; Sheridan comments on it in his play, and fuller details will be found in the Notes.



SHERIDAN'S PREFACE

A PREFACE to a play seems generally to be considered as a kind of closet-prologue, in which—if his piece has been successful—the author solicits that indulgence from the reader which he had before experienced from the audience: but as the scope and immediate object of a play is to please a mixed assembly in *representation* (whose judgment in the theatre at least is decisive), its degree of reputation is usually as determined by the public, before it can be prepared for the cooler tribunal of the study. Thus any further solicitude on the part of the writer becomes unnecessary at least, if not an intrusion: and if the piece has been condemned in the performance, I fear an address to the closet, like an appeal to posterity, is constantly regarded as the procrastination of a suit, from a consciousness of the weakness of the cause. From these considerations, the following comedy would certainly have been submitted to the reader, without any further introduction than what it had in the representation, but that its success has probably been founded on a circumstance which the author is informed has not before attended a theatrical trial, and which consequently ought not to pass unnoticed.

I need scarcely add, that the circumstance alluded to was the withdrawing of the piece, to remove those imperfections in the first representation which were too obvious to escape reprehension, and too numerous to admit of a hasty correction. There are few writers, I believe, who, even in the fullest consciousness of error, do not wish to palliate the faults which they acknowledge; and, however trifling the performance, to second their confession of its deficiencies, by whatever plea

seems least disgraceful to their ability. In the present instance, it cannot be said to amount either to candour or modesty in me, to acknowledge an extreme inexperience and want of judgment on matters, in which, without guidance from practice, or spur from success, a young man should scarcely boast of being an adept. If it be said that under such disadvantages no one should attempt to write a play, I must beg leave to dissent from the position, while the first point of experience that I have gained on the subject is, a knowledge of the candour and judgment with which an impartial public distinguishes between the errors of inexperience and incapacity, and the indulgence which it shows even to a disposition to remedy the defects of either.

It were unnecessary to enter into any further extenuation of what was thought exceptionable in this play, but that it has been said, that the managers should have prevented some of the defects before its appearance to the public—and in particular the uncommon length of the piece as represented the first night. It were an ill return for the most liberal and gentlemanly conduct on their side, to suffer any censure to rest where none was deserved. Hurry in writing has long been exploded as an excuse for an author;—however, in the dramatic line, it may happen, that both an author and a manager may wish to fill a chasm in the entertainment of the public with a hastiness not altogether culpable. The season was advanced when I first put the play into Mr. Harris's hands: it was at that time at least double the length of any acting comedy. I profited by his judgment and experience in the curtailing of it—till, I believe, his feeling for the vanity of a young author got the better of his desire for correctness, and he left many excrescences remaining, because he had assisted in pruning so many more. Hence, though I was not uninformed that the acts were still too long, I flattered myself that, after the first trial, I might with safer judgment proceed to remove what should appear to have been most dissatisfactory. Many other errors there were, which might in part have arisen

from my being by no means conversant with plays in general, either in reading or at the theatre. Yet I own that, in one respect, I did not regret my ignorance : for as my first wish in attempting a play was to avoid every appearance of plagiary, I thought I should stand a better chance of effecting this from being in a walk which I had not frequented, and where, consequently, the progress of invention was less likely to be interrupted by starts of recollection : for on subjects on which the mind has been much informed, invention is slow of exerting itself. Faded ideas float in the fancy like half-forgotten dreams ; and the imagination in its fullest enjoyments becomes suspicious of its offspring, and doubts whether it has created or adopted.

With regard to some particular passages which on the first night's representation seemed generally disliked, I confess that if I felt any emotion of surprise at the disapprobation, it was not that they were disapproved of, but that I had not before perceived that they deserved it. As some part of the attack on the piece was begun too early to pass for the sentence of *judgment*, which is ever tardy in condemning, it has been suggested to me that much of the disapprobation must have arisen from virulence of malice, rather than severity of criticism: but as I was more apprehensive of there being just grounds to excite the latter than conscious of having deserved the former, I continue not to believe that probable which I am sure must have been unprovoked. However, if it was so, and I could even mark the quarter from whence it came, it would be ungenerous to retort ; for no passion suffers more than malice from disappointment. For my own part, I see no reason why the author of a play should not regard a first night's audience as a candid and judicious friend attending, in behalf of the public, at his last rehearsal. If he can dispense with flattery, he is sure at least of sincerity, and even though the annotation be rude, he may rely upon the justness of the comment. Considered in this light, that audience, whose *fiat* is essential to the poet's claim, whether his object be fame or

profit, has surely a right to expect some deference to its opinion, from principles of politeness at least, if not from gratitude.

As for the little puny critics, who scatter their peevish strictures in private circles, and scribble at every author who has the eminence of being unconnected with them, as they are usually spleen-swoln from a vain idea of increasing their consequence, there will always be found a petulance and illiberality in their remarks, which should place them as far beneath the notice of a gentleman as their original dulness had sunk them from the level of the most unsuccessful author.

It is not without pleasure that I catch at an opportunity of justifying myself from the charge of intending any national reflection in the character of Sir Lucius O'Trigger. If any gentleman opposed the piece from that idea, I thank them sincerely for their opposition ; and if the condemnation of this comedy (however misconceived the provocation) could have added one spark to the decaying flame of national attachment to the country supposed to be reflected on, I should have been happy in its fate, and might with truth have boasted that it had done more real service in its failure than the successful morality of a thousand stage-novels will ever effect.

It is usual, I believe, to thank the performers in a new play for the exertion of their several abilities. But where (as in this instance) their merit has been so striking and uncontroverted as to call for the warmest and truest applause from a number of judicious audiences, the poet's after-praise comes like the feeble acclamation of a child to close the shouts of a multitude. The conduct, however, of the principals in a theatre cannot be so apparent to the public. I think it therefore but justice to declare, that from this theatre (the only one I can speak of from experience) those writers who wish to try the dramatic line will meet with that candour and liberal attention which are generally allowed to be better calculated to lead genius into excellence than either the precepts of judgment or the guidance of experience.

THE AUTHOR.

PROLOGUE

BY THE AUTHOR

SPOKEN BY MR. WOODWARD AND MR. QUICK

*Enter SERJEANT AT LAW, and ATTORNEY following,
and giving a paper*

Serj. What's here!—a vile cramp hand! I cannot see
Without my spectacles.—*Att.* He means his fee.

Nay, Mr. Serjeant, good sir, try again. [Gives money.]

Serj. The scrawl improves! [More.] Oh come, 'tis
pretty plain.

Hey! how's this? Dibble!—sure it cannot be!

A poet's brief! a poet and a fee!

Att. Yes, sir! though *you* without reward, I know,
Would gladly plead the Muse's cause.—*Serj.* So!—So!

Att. And if the fee offends, your wrath should fall
On me.—*Serj.* Dear Dibble, no offence at all. 10

Att. Some sons of Phœbus in the courts we meet,

Serj. And fifty sons of Phœbus in the Fleet!

Att. Nor pleads he worse, who with a decent sprig
Of bays adorns his legal waste of wig.

Serj. Full-bottomed heroes thus, on signs, unfurl
A leaf of laurel in a grove of curl!

Yet tell your client, that, in adverse days,
This wig is warmer than a bush of bays.

Att. Do you, then, sir, my client's place supply,

Profuse of robe, and prodigal of tie—— 20
 Do you, with all those blushing powers of face,
 And wonted bashful hesitating grace,
 Rise in the court, and flourish on the case. [Exit.

Serj. For practice then suppose—this brief will show it,——

Me, Serjeant Woodward,—counsel for the poet.
 Used to the ground, I know 'tis hard to deal
 With this dread *court*, from whence there's no *appeal* ;
 No *tricking* here, to blunt the edge of *law*,
 Or, damn'd in *equity*, escape by *flaw* :
 But *judgment* given, *your sentence* must remain ; 30
 No *writ of error* lies—to *Drury-lane* !

Yet when so kind you seem, 'tis past dispute
 We gain some favour, if not *costs of suit*.
 No spleen is here ! I see no hoarded fury ;
 —I think I never faced a milder jury !
 Sad else our plight ! where frowns are transportation,
 A hiss the gallows, and a groan damnation !
 But such the public candour, without fear
 My client waves all *right of challenge* here.
 No newsman from *our session* is dismiss'd, 40
 Nor wit nor critic *we* scratch off the list ;
 His faults can never hurt another's ease,
 His crime, at worst, a *bad attempt* to please :
 Thus, all respecting, he appeals to all,
 And by the general voice will *stand or fall*.

The play being withdrawn after the first night's representation, upon its second appearance the lines from " Hey ! how's this ? " to " no offence at all," were omitted, and the following inserted :

" How's this ! the poet's brief again ! Oh ho !
Cast, I suppose ?—*Att.* Oh pardon me—No—No—
We found the court, o'erlooking stricter laws,
Indulgent to the merits of the cause ;
By *judges* mild, unused to harsh denial,
A rule was granted for *another trial*.

Serj. Then hark'ee, Dibble, did you *mend* your *pleadings* :
Errors, no few, we've *found* in our *proceedings*.

Att. Come, courage, sir, we did *amend* our *plea*,
Hence your *new brief*, and this *refreshing fee*."

PROLOGUE

BY THE AUTHOR

SPOKEN ON THE TENTH NIGHT BY MRS. BULKLEY

GRANTED our cause, our suit and trial o'er,
The worthy Serjeant need appear no more :
In pleasing I a different client choose,
He served the Poet,—I would serve the Muse :
Like him, I'll try to merit your applause,
A female counsel in a female's cause.

Look on this form,¹—where Humour, quaint and sly,
Dimples the cheek, and points the beaming eye ;

Where gay Invention seems to boast its wiles
In amorous hint, and half-triumphant smiles ; 10
While her light mask or covers Satire's strokes,
Or hides the conscious blush her wit provokes.

—Look on her well—does she seem form'd to teach ?
Should you *expect* to hear this lady preach ?
Is gray experience suited to her youth ?
Do solemn sentiments become that mouth ?
Bid her be grave, those lips should rebel prove
To every theme that slanders mirth or love.

Yet thus adorn'd with every graceful art
To charm the fancy and yet reach the heart—
Must we displace her ? And instead advance
The Goddess of the woful countenance—

10

20

¹ Pointing to the figure of Comedy.

The sentimental Muse!—Her emblems view,
The Pilgrim's Progress, and a sprig of rue!
View her—too chaste to look like flesh and blood—
Primly portrayed on emblematic wood!
There fix'd in usurpation should she stand,
She'll snatch the dagger from her sister's hand:
And having made her vot'ries *weep a flood*,
Good heaven! she'll end her comedies in blood— 30
Bid Harry Woodward break poor Dunstal's crown!
Imprison Quick, and knock Ned Shuter down;
While sad Barsanti, weeping o'er the scene,
Shall stab herself—or poison Mrs. Green.—

Such dire encroachments to prevent in time,
Demands the critic's voice—the poet's rhyme.
Can our light scenes add strength to holy laws!
Such puny patronage but hurts the cause:
Fair Virtue scorns our feeble aid to ask;
And moral Truth despairs the trickster's mask. 40
For here their fav'rite stands,¹ whose brow, severe
And sad, claims Youth's respect, and Pity's tear;
Who, when oppress'd by foes her worth creates,
Can point a poniard at the Guilt she hates.

¹ Pointing to Tragedy.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

AS ORIGINALLY ACTED AT COVENT-GARDEN THEATRE IN 1775

SIR ANTHONY ABSOLUTE	-	-	<i>Mr. Shuter.</i>
CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE	-	-	<i>Mr. Woodward.</i>
FAULKLAND	-	-	<i>Mr. Lewis.</i>
ACRES	-	-	<i>Mr. Quick.</i>
SIR LUCIUS O'TRIGGER	-	-	<i>Mr. Lee.¹</i>
FAG	-	-	<i>Mr. Lee Lewes.</i>
DAVID	-	-	<i>Mr. Dunstal.</i>
COACHMAN	-	-	<i>Mr. Fearon.</i>
MRS. MALAPROP	-	-	<i>Mrs. Green.</i>
LYDIA LANGUISH	-	-	<i>Miss Barsanti.</i>
JULIA	-	-	<i>Mrs. Bulkley.</i>
LUCY	-	-	<i>Mrs. Lessingham.</i>

Maid, Boy, Servants, etc.

Scene—Bath.

Time of Action—Five Hours.

¹ Afterwards by Mr. Clinch.

ACT I

SCENE I.—*A Street in Bath*

COACHMAN crosses the stage.—Enter FAG, looking after him

Fag. What ! Thomas !—Sure 'tis he ?—What ! Thomas ! Thomas !

Coach. Hey !—Odds life ! Mr. Fag !—give us your hand, my old fellow-servant.

Fag. Excuse my glove, Thomas :—I'm devilish glad to see you, my lad : why, my prince of charioteers, you look as hearty !—but who the deuce thought of seeing you in Bath ?

Coach. Sure, master, Madam Julia, Harry, Mrs. Kate, and the postillion, be all come. 10

Fag. Indeed !

Coach. Ay ! master thought another fit of the gout was coming to make him a visit ;—so he'd a mind to gi't the slip, and whip ! we were all off at an hour's warning.

Fag. Ay, ay ! hasty in everything, or it would not be Sir Anthony Absolute !

Coach. But tell us, Mr. Fag, how does young master ? Odd ! Sir Anthony will stare to see the captain here !

Fag. I do not serve Captain Absolute now.—

Coach. Why, sure !

Fag. At present I am employed by Ensign Beverley.

Coach. I doubt, Mr. Fag, you ha'n't changed for the better.

Fag. I have not changed, Thomas.

Coach. No ! why, didn't you say you had left young master ?

Fag. No.—Well, honest Thomas, I must puzzle you no further :—briefly then—Captain Absolute and Ensign Beverley are one and the same person.

Coach. The devil they are !

30

Fag. So it is indeed, Thomas ; and the *ensign* half of my master being on guard at present—the *captain* has nothing to do with me.

Coach. So, so !—what, this is some freak, I warrant !—Do tell us, Mr. Fag, the meaning o't—you know I ha' trusted you.

Fag. You'll be secret, Thomas ?

Coach. As a coach-horse.

Fag. Why then, the cause of all this is—LOVE,—Love, Thomas, who (as you may get read to you) has been a masquerader ever since the days of Jupiter.

41

Coach. Ay, ay ;—I guess'd there was a lady in the case :—but pray, why does your master pass only for *ensign* ?—now if he had shamm'd *general* indeed—

Fag. Ah ! Thomas, there lies the mystery o' the matter. Hark'ee, Thomas, my master is in love with a lady of a very singular taste : a lady who likes him better as a *half-pay ensign* than if she knew he was son and heir to Sir Anthony Absolute, a baronet of three thousand a year.

50

Coach. That is an odd taste indeed !—but has she got the stuff, Mr. Fag ? is she rich, hey ?

Fag. Rich !—why, I believe she owns half the stocks !

Zounds ! Thomas, she could pay the national debt as easily as I could my washerwoman !—She has a lap-dog that eats out of gold,—she feeds her parrot with small pearls,—and all her thread-papers are made of banknotes!

Coach. Bravo, faith !—Odd ! I warrant she has a set of thousands at least :—but does she draw kindly with the captain ?

60

Fag. As fond as pigeons.

Coach. May one hear her name ?

Fag. Miss Lydia Languish.—But there is an old tough aunt in the way ;—though, by the bye, she has never seen my master—for we got acquainted with miss while on a visit in Gloucestershire.

Coach. Well—I wish they were once harnessed together in matrimony.—But pray, Mr. Fag, what kind of a place is this Bath ?—I ha' heard a deal of it—here's a mort o' merry-making, hey ?

70

Fag. Pretty well, Thomas, pretty well—'tis a good lounge ; in the morning we go to the pump-room (though neither my master nor I drink the waters) ; after breakfast we saunter on the parades, or play a game at billiards ; at night we dance ; but damn the place, I'm tired of it : their regular hours stupefy me—not a fiddle nor a card after eleven !—however, Mr. Faulkland's gentleman and I keep it up a little in private parties ;—I'll introduce you there, Thomas—you'll like him much.

Coach. Sure, I know Mr. Du Peigne—you know his master is to marry Madam Julia.

81

Fag. I had forgot.—But, Thomas, you must polish a little—indeed you must—Here now—this wig !—what the devil do you do with a wig, Thomas ?—none of the London whips of any degree of *ton* wear wigs now.

Coach. More's the pity ! more's the pity, I say—Odds life ! when I heard how the lawyers and doctors had took to their own hair, I thought how 'twould go next :—Odd rabbit it ! when the fashion had got foot on the Bar, I guess'd 'twould mount to the Box !—but 'tis all out of character, believe me, Mr. Fag : and look'ee, I'll never gi' up mine—the lawyers and doctors may do as they will. 93

Fag. Well, Thomas, we'll not quarrel about that.

Coach. Why, bless you, the gentlemen of they professions ben't all of a mind—for in our village now, thoff Jack Gauge the exciseman has ta'en to his carrots, there's little Dick the farrier swears he'll never forsake his bob, tho' all the college should appear with their own heads ! 100

Fag. Indeed ! well said, Dick ! but hold—mark ! mark ! Thomas.

Coach. Zooks ! 'tis the captain—Is that the lady with him ?

Fag. No ! no ! that is Madam Lucy—my master's mistress's maid. They lodge at that house—but I must after him to tell him the news.

Coach. Odd ! he's giving her money !—well, Mr. Fag—

Fag. Good-bye, Thomas. I have an appointment in Gyde's Porch this evening at eight ; meet me there, and we'll make a little party. [Exeunt severally.]

SCENE II.—*A Dressing-room in Mrs. MALAPROP'S Lodgings*

LYDIA sitting on a sofa, with a book in her hand.

LUCY, as just returned from a message

Lucy. Indeed, ma'am, I traversed half the town in search of it: I don't believe there's a circulating library in Bath I ha'n't been at.

Lydia. And could not you get "The Reward of Constancy"?

Lucy. No, indeed, ma'am.

Lydia. Nor "The Fatal Connexion"?

Lucy. No, indeed, ma'am.

Lydia. Nor "The Mistakes of the Heart"?

Lucy. Ma'am, as ill luck would have it, Mr. Bull said Miss Sukey Saunter had just fetched it away. 11

Lydia. Heigh-ho!—Did you inquire for "The Delicate Distress"?

Lucy. —Or "The Memoirs of Lady Woodford"? Yes, indeed, ma'am. I asked everywhere for it; and I might have brought it from Mr. Frederick's, but Lady Slattern Lounger, who had just sent it home, had so soiled and dog's-ear'd it, it wa'n't fit for a Christian to read.

Lydia. Heigh-ho!—Yes, I always know when Lady Slattern has been before me. She has a most observing thumb; and, I believe, cherishes her nails for the convenience of making marginal notes.—Well, child, what have you brought me? 24

Lucy. Oh! here, ma'am.

[*Taking books from under her cloak, and from her pockets.*]

This is "The Gordian Knot,"—and this "Peregrine Pickle." Here are "The Tears of Sensibility," and "Humphrey Clinker." This is "The Memoirs of a Lady of Quality, written by herself," and here the second volume of "The Sentimental Journey." 30

Lydia. Heigh-ho!—What are those books by the glass?

Lucy. The great one is only "The Whole Duty of Man," where I press a few blonds, ma'am.

Lydia. Very well—give me the *sal volatile*.

Lucy. Is it in a blue cover, ma'am?

Lydia. My smelling-bottle, you simpleton!

Lucy. Oh, the drops!—here, ma'am.

Lydia. Hold!—here's some one coming—quick, see who it is— [Exit LUCY.

Surely I heard my cousin Julia's voice!

41

[Re-enter LUCY.

Lucy. Lud! ma'am, here is Miss Melville.

Lydia. Is it possible!—

Enter JULIA

Lydia. My dearest Julia, how delighted am I! (Embrace.) How unexpected was this happiness!

Julia. True, Lydia—and our pleasure is the greater;—but what has been the matter?—you were denied to me at first!

Lydia. Ah, Julia, I have a thousand things to tell you!—but first inform me what has conjured you to Bath?—Is Sir Anthony here? 51

Julia. He is—we are arrived within this hour—and I suppose he will be here to wait on Mrs. Malaprop as soon as he is dress'd.

Lydia. Then before we are interrupted, let me impart to you some of my distress!—I know your gentle nature will sympathise with me, though your prudence may condemn me!—My letters have informed you of my whole connection with Beverley;—but I have lost him, Julia!—my aunt has discovered our intercourse by a note she intercepted, and has confined me ever since!—Yet, would you believe it? she has fallen absolutely in love with a tall Irish baronet she met one night since we have been here at Lady Macshuffle's rout. 64

Julia. You jest, Lydia!

Lydia. No, upon my word.—She really carries on a kind of correspondence with him, under a feigned name though, till she chooses to be known to him;—but it is a Delia or a Celia, I assure you.

Julia. Then, surely, she is now more indulgent to her niece. 71

Lydia. Quite the contrary. Since she has discovered her own frailty, she is become more suspicious of mine. Then I must inform you of another plague!—That odious Acres is to be in Bath to-day; so that I protest I shall be teased out of all spirits!

Julia. Come, come, Lydia, hope for the best—Sir Anthony shall use his interest with Mrs. Malaprop.

Lydia. But you have not heard the worst. Unfortunately I had quarrelled with my poor Beverley, just before my aunt made the discovery, and I have not seen him since, to make it up. 82

Julia. What was his offence?

Lydia. Nothing at all!—But, I don't know how it was, as often as we had been together, we had never had a quarrel!—And, somehow, I was afraid he would never

give me an opportunity.—So, last Thursday, I wrote a letter to myself, to inform myself that Beverley was at that time paying his addresses to another woman. I signed it “your friend unknown,” showed it to Beverley, charged him with his falsehood, put myself in a violent passion, and vowed I’d never see him more. 92

Julia. And you let him depart so, and have not seen him since?

Lydia. 'Twas the next day my aunt found the matter out. I intended only to have teased him three days and a half, and now I’ve lost him for ever.

Julia. If he is as deserving and sincere as you have represented him to me, he will never give you up so. Yet consider, Lydia, you tell me he is but an ensign, and you have thirty thousand pounds! 101

Lydia. But you know I lose most of my fortune if I marry without my aunt’s consent, till of age; and that is what I have determined to do, ever since I knew the penalty. Nor could I love the man who would wish to wait a day for the alternative.

Julia. Nay, this is caprice!

Lydia. What, does Julia tax me with caprice?—I thought her lover Faulkland had inured her to it.

Julia. I do not love even *his* faults. 110

Lydia. But apropos—you have sent to him, I suppose?

Julia. Not yet, upon my word—nor has he the least idea of my being in Bath. Sir Anthony’s resolution was so sudden, I could not inform him of it.

Lydia. Well, Julia, you are your own mistress (though under the protection of Sir Anthony), yet have you, for this long year, been a slave to the caprice, the whim, the jealousy of this ungrateful Faulkland, who will ever delay

assuming the right of a husband, while you suffer him to be equally imperious as a lover. 120

Julia. Nay, you are wrong entirely. We were contracted before my father's death. That, and some consequent embarrassments, have delayed what I know to be my Faulkland's most ardent wish. He is too generous to trifle on such a point.—And for his character, you wrong him there too. No, Lydia, he is too proud, too noble to be jealous ; if he is captious, 'tis without dissembling ; if fretful, without rudeness. Unused to the fopperies of love, he is negligent of the little duties expected from a lover—but being unhackneyed in the passion, his affection is ardent and sincere ; and as it engrosses his whole soul, he expects every thought and emotion of his mistress to move in unison with his. Yet, though his pride calls for this full return, his humility makes him undervalue those qualities in him which would entitle him to it ; and not feeling why he should be loved to the degree he wishes, he still suspects that he is not loved enough :—This temper, I must own, has cost me many unhappy hours ; but I have learned to think myself his debtor, for those imperfections which arise from the ardour of his attachment. 141

Lydia. Well, I cannot blame you for defending him. But tell me candidly, Julia, had he never saved your life, do you think you should have been attached to him as you are ?—Believe me, the rude blast that overset your boat was a prosperous gale of love to him.

Julia. Gratitude may have strengthened my attachment to Mr. Faulkland, but I loved him before he had preserved me ; yet surely that alone were an obligation sufficient— 150

Lydia. Obligation!—Why a water-s spaniel would have done as much!—Well, I should never think of giving my heart to a man because he could swim!

Julia. Come, Lydia, you are too inconsiderate.

Lydia. Nay, I do but jest.—What's here?

Enter LUCY in a hurry

Lucy. Oh, ma'am, here is Sir Anthony Absolute just come home with your aunt.

Lydia. They'll not come here.—Lucy, do you watch.

[*Exit LUCY.*]

Julia. Yet I must go. Sir Anthony does not know I am here, and if we meet, he'll detain me, to show me the town. I'll take another opportunity of paying my respects to Mrs. Malaprop, when she shall treat me, as long as she chooses, with her select words so ingeniously *misapplied*, without being *mispronounced*. 164

Re-enter LUCY

Lucy. O Lud! ma'am, they are both coming upstairs.

Lydia. Well, I'll not detain you, coz.—Adieu, my dear Julia, I'm sure you are in haste to send to Faulkland.—There—through my room you'll find another staircase.

Julia. Adieu!—(*Embrace.*) [*Exit JULIA.*]

Lydia. Here, my dear Lucy, hide these books. Quick, quick.—Fling “Peregrine Pickle” under the toilet—throw “Roderick Random” into the closet—put “The Innocent Adultery” into “The Whole Duty of Man”—thrust “Lord Aimworth” under the sofa—cram “Ovid” behind the bolster—there—put “The Man of Feeling” into your pocket—so, so—now lay “Mrs. Chapone” in sight, and leave “Fordyce’s Sermons” open on the table.

Lucy. Oh, burn it, ma'am, the hair-dresser has torn away as far as Proper Pride.

Lydia. Never mind—open at Sobriety.—Fling me “Lord Chesterfield’s Letters.”—Now for ‘em. 181

Enter Mrs. MALAPROP and Sir ANTHONY ABSOLUTE

Mrs. Mal. There, Sir Anthony, there sits the deliberate simpleton, who wants to disgrace her family, and lavish herself on a fellow not worth a shilling.

Lydia. Madam, I thought you once—

Mrs. Mal. You thought, miss ! I don’t know any business you have to think at all—thought does not become a young woman. But the point we would request of you is, that you will promise to forget this fellow—to illiterate him, I say, quite from your memory. 190

Lydia. Ah, madam ! our memories are independent of our wills. It is not so easy to forget.

Mrs. Mal. But I say it is, miss ; there is nothing on earth so easy as to *forget*, if a person chooses to set about it. I’m sure I have as much forgot your poor dear uncle, as if he had never existed—and I thought it my duty so to do ; and let me tell you, Lydia, these violent memories don’t become a young woman.

Sir Anth. Why, sure, she won’t pretend to remember what she’s order’d not !—ay, this comes of her reading !

Lydia. What crime, madam, have I committed, to be treated thus ? 202

Mrs. Mal. Now don’t attempt to extirpate yourself from the matter ; you know I have proof controvertible of it.—But tell me, will you promise to do as you’re bid ? Will you take a husband of your friends’ choosing ?

Lydia. Madam, I must tell you plainly, that had I no

preference for any one else, the choice you have made would be my aversion.

Mrs. Mal. What business have you, miss, with *preference* and *aversion*? They don't become a young woman; and you ought to know, that as both always wear off, 'tis safest in matrimony to begin with a little *aversion*. I am sure I hated your poor dear uncle before marriage as if he'd been a black-a-moor—and yet, miss, you are sensible what a wife I made!—and when it pleased Heaven to release me from him, 'tis unknown what tears I shed!—But suppose we were going to give you another choice, will you promise us to give up this Beverley? 220

Lydia. Could I belie my thoughts so far as to give that promise, my actions would certainly as far belie my words.

Mrs. Mal. Take yourself to your room.—You are fit company for nothing but your own ill-humours.

Lydia. Willingly, ma'am—I cannot change for the worse. [Exit LYDIA.]

Mrs. Mal. There's a little intricate hussy for you!

Sir Anth. It is not to be wondered at, ma'am,—all this is the natural consequence of teaching girls to read. Had I a thousand daughters, by heaven! I'd as soon have them taught the black art as their alphabet! 231

Mrs. Mal. Nay, nay, Sir Anthony, you are an absolute misanthropy.

Sir Anth. In my way hither, Mrs. Malaprop, I observed your niece's maid coming forth from a circulating library!—She had a book in each hand—they were half-bound volumes, with marble covers!—From that moment I guessed how full of duty I should see her mistress!

Mrs. Mal. Those are vile places, indeed!

Sir Anth. Madam, a circulating library in a town is as an evergreen tree of diabolical knowledge ! It blossoms through the year !—And depend on it, Mrs. Malaprop, that they who are so fond of handling the leaves, will long for the fruit at last.

244

Mrs. Mal. Fie, fie, Sir Anthony, you surely speak laconically.

Sir Anth. Why, Mrs. Malaprop, in moderation, now, what would you have a woman know ?

Mrs. Mal. Observe me, Sir Anthony.—I would by no means wish a daughter of mine to be a progeny of learning; I don't think so much learning becomes a young woman ; for instance, I would never let her meddle with Greek, or Hebrew, or Algebra, or Simony, or Fluxions, or Paradoxes, or such inflammatory branches of learning—neither would it be necessary for her to handle any of your mathematical, astronomical, diabolical instruments :—But, Sir Anthony, I would send her, at nine years old, to a boarding-school, in order to learn a little ingenuity and artifice. Then, sir, she should have a supercilious knowledge in accounts ;—and as she grew up, I would have her instructed in geometry, that she might know something of the contagious countries ;—but above all, Sir Anthony, she should be mistress of orthodoxy, that she might not mis-spell, and mis-pronounce words so shamefully as girls usually do ; and likewise that she might reprehend the true meaning of what she is saying. This, Sir Anthony, is what I would have a woman know ;—and I don't think there is a superstitious article in it.

Sir Anth. Well, well, Mrs. Malaprop, I will dispute the point no further with you ; though I must confess, that you are a truly moderate and polite arguer, for almost

every third word you say is on my side of the question. But, Mrs. Malaprop, to the more important point in debate,—you say, you have no objection to my proposal.

Mrs. Mal. None, I assure you. I am under no positive engagement with Mr. Acres, and as Lydia is so obstinate against him, perhaps your son may have better success.

Sir Anth. Well, madam, I will write for the boy directly. He knows not a syllable of this yet, though I have for some time had the proposal in my head. He is at present with his regiment. 281

Mrs. Mal. We have never seen your son, Sir Anthony; but I hope no objection on his side.

Sir Anth. Objection!—let him object if he dare!—No, no, Mrs. Malaprop, Jack knows that the least demur puts me in a frenzy directly. My process was always very simple—in their younger days, 'twas “Jack, do this”;—if he demurred, I knocked him down—and if he grumbled at that I always sent him out of the room.

Mrs. Mal. Ay, and the properest way, o' my conscience!—nothing is so conciliating to young people as severity.—Well, Sir Anthony, I shall give Mr. Acres his discharge, and prepare Lydia to receive your son's invocations;—and I hope you will represent *her* to the captain as an object not altogether illegible. 295

Sir Anth. Madam, I will handle the subject prudently.—Well, I must leave you; and let me beg you, Mrs. Malaprop, to enforce this matter roundly to the girl;—take my advice—keep a tight hand: if she rejects this proposal, clap her under lock and key; and if you were just to let the servants forget to bring her dinner for three or four days, you can't conceive how she'd come about.

[*Exit* Sir ANTH.]

Mrs. Mal. Well, at any rate I shall be glad to get her from under my intuition. She has somehow discovered my partiality for Sir Lucius O'Trigger—sure, Lucy can't have betrayed me!—No, the girl is such a simpleton, I should have made her confess it.—Lucy!—Lucy!—*(Calls).* Had she been one of your artificial ones, I should never have trusted her.

Enter Lucy

Lucy. Did you call, ma'am?

310

Mrs. Mal. Yes, girl.—Did you see Sir Lucius while you was out?

Lucy. No, indeed, ma'am, not a glimpse of him.

Mrs. Mal. You are sure, Lucy, that you never mentioned—

Lucy. O Gemini! I'd sooner cut my tongue out.

Mrs. Mal. Well, don't let your simplicity be imposed on.

Lucy. No, ma'am.

Mrs. Mal. So, come to me presently, and I'll give you another letter to Sir Lucius; but mind, Lucy—if ever you betray what you are entrusted with (unless it be other people's secrets to me), you forfeit my malevolence for ever; and your being a simpleton shall be no excuse for your locality.

[*Exit Mrs. MAL.*

Lucy. Ha! ha! ha!—So, my dear *simplicity*, let me give you a little respite—*(altering her manner)*—let girls in my station be as fond as they please of appearing expert, and knowing in their trusts; commend me to a mask of *silliness*, and a pair of sharp eyes for my own interest under it!—Let me see to what account have I turned my *simplicity* lately—*(looks at a paper)*. For

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abetting Miss Lydia Languish in a design of running away with an ensign!—in money, sundry times, twelve pound twelve; gowns, five; hats, ruffles, caps, etc., etc., numberless!—From the said ensign, within this last month, six guineas and a half.—About a quarter's pay!—Item, from Mrs. Malaprop, for betraying the young people to her—when I found matters were likely to be discovered—two guineas, and a black padusoy.—Item, from Mr. Acres, for carrying divers letters—which I never delivered—two guineas, and a pair of buckles.—Item, from Sir Lucius O'Trigger, three crowns, two gold pocket-pieces, and a silver snuff-box!—Well done, simplicity!—yet I was forced to make my Hibernian believe, that he was corresponding, not with the aunt, but with the niece: for though not over-rich, I found he had too much pride and delicacy to sacrifice the feelings of a gentleman to the necessities of his fortunes.

[Exit.

ACT II

SCENE I.—Captain ABSOLUTE'S *Lodgings*

Captain ABSOLUTE and FAG

Fag. Sir, while I was there Sir Anthony came in : I told him, you had sent me to inquire after his health, and to know if he was at leisure to see you.

Abs. And what did he say, on hearing I was at Bath ?

Fag. Sir, in my life I never saw an elderly gentleman more astonished ! He started back two or three paces, rapt out a dozen interjectural oaths, and asked, what the devil had brought you here ?

Abs. Well, sir, and what did you say ?

Fag. Oh, I lied, sir—I forget the precise lie ; but you may depend on't, he got no truth from me. Yet, with submission, for fear of blunders in future, I should be glad to fix what *has* brought us to Bath ; in order that we may lie a little consistently.—Sir Anthony's servants were curious, sir, very curious indeed. 15

Abs. You have said nothing to them——?

Fag. Oh, not a word, sir,—not a word. Mr. Thomas, indeed, the coachman (whom I take to be the discreetest of whips)—

Abs. 'Sdeath !—you rascal ! you have not trusted him !

Fag. Oh, *no*, sir—no—no—not a syllable, upon my

veracity!—He was, indeed, a little inquisitive; but I was sly, sir—devilish sly! My master (said I), honest Thomas (you know, sir, one says *honest* to one's inferiors), is come to Bath to *recruit*—Yes, sir, I said *to recruit*—and whether for men, money, or constitution, you know, sir, is nothing to him, nor any one else. 27

Abs. Well, *recruit* will do—let it be so.

Fag. Oh, sir, *recruit* will do surprisingly—indeed, to give the thing an air, I told Thomas, that your honour had already enlisted five disbanded chairmen, seven minority waiters, and thirteen billiard-markers. 32

Abs. You blockhead, never say more than is necessary.

Fag. I beg pardon, sir—I beg pardon—But, with submission, a lie is nothing unless one supports it. Sir, whenever I draw on my invention for a good current lie, I always forge indorsements as well as the bill.

Abs. Well, take care you don't hurt your credit, by offering too much security.—Is Mr. Faulkland returned?

Fag. He is above, sir, changing his dress. 40

Abs. Can you tell whether he has been informed of Sir Anthony's and Miss Melville's arrival?

Fag. I fancy not, sir; he has seen no one since he came in but his gentleman, who was with him at Bristol.—I think, sir, I hear Mr. Faulkland coming down—

Abs. Go, tell him, I am here.

Fag. Yes, sir—(*going*)—I beg pardon, sir, but should Sir Anthony call, you will do me the favour to remember, that we are *recruiting*, if you please.

Abs. Well, well.

Fag. And in tenderness to my character, if your honour could bring in the chairmen and waiters, I should esteem it as an obligation; for though I never scruple a

lie to serve my master, yet it hurts one's conscience to be found out.

[Exit.

Abs. Now for my whimsical friend—if he does not know that his mistress is here, I'll tease him a little before I tell him—

Enter FAULKLAND

Faulkland, you're welcome to Bath again; you are punctual in your return.

60

Faulk. Yes; I had nothing to detain me, when I had finished the business I went on. Well, what news since I left you? How stand matters between you and Lydia?

Abs. Faith, much as they were; I have not seen her since our quarrel; however, I expect to be recalled every hour.

Faulk. Why don't you persuade her to go off with you at once?

Abs. What, and lose two-thirds of her fortune? You forget that, my friend.—No, no, I could have brought her to that long ago.

71

Faulk. Nay then, you trifle too long—if you are sure of her, propose to the aunt *in your own character*, and write to Sir Anthony for his consent.

Abs. Softly, softly; for though I am convinced my little Lydia would elope with me as Ensign Beverley, yet am I by no means certain that she would take me with the impediment of our friends' consent, a regular humdrum wedding, and the reversion of a good fortune on my side: no, no; I must prepare her gradually for the discovery, and make myself necessary to her, before I risk it.—Well, but Faulkland, you'll dine with us to-day at the Hotel?

Faulk. Indeed I cannot; I am not in spirits to be of such a party.

84

Abs. By heavens ! I shall forswear your company. You are the most teasing, captious, incorrigible lover !—Do love like a man.

Faulk. I own I am unfit for company.

Abs. Am not *I* a lover ; ay, and a romantic one too ? Yet do I carry everywhere with me such a confounded farrago of doubts, fears, hopes, wishes, and all the flimsy furniture of a country miss's brain ? 92

Faulk. Ah ! Jack, your heart and soul are not, like mine, fixed immutably on one only object. You throw for a large stake, but losing, you could stake, and throw again :—but I have set my sum of happiness on this cast, and not to succeed, were to be stript of all.

Abs. But, for Heaven's sake ! what grounds for apprehension can your whimsical brain conjure up at present ? 100

Faulk. What grounds for apprehension, did you say ? Heavens ! are there not a thousand ! I fear for her spirits —her health—her life.—My absence may fret her ; her anxiety for my return, her fears for me, may oppress her gentle temper. And for her health, does not every hour bring me cause to be alarmed ? If it rains, some shower may even then have chilled her delicate frame ! If the wind be keen, some rude blast may have affected her ! The heat of noon, the dews of the evening, may endanger the life of her, for whom only I value mine. Oh, Jack ! when delicate and feeling souls are separated, there is not a feature in the sky, not a movement of the elements, not an aspiration of the breeze, but hints some cause for a lover's apprehension ! 114

Abs. Ay, but we may choose whether we will take the hint or not.—So, then, Faulkland, if you were convinced

that Julia were well and in spirits, you would be entirely content.

Faulk. I should be happy beyond measure—I am anxious only for that. 120

Abs. Then to cure your anxiety at once—Miss Melville is in perfect health, and is at this moment in Bath.

Faulk. Nay, Jack—don't trifle with me.

Abs. She is arrived here with my father within this hour.

Faulk. Can you be serious ?

Abs. I thought you knew Sir Anthony better than to be surprised at a sudden whim of this kind.—Seriously then, it is as I tell you—upon my honour.

Faulk. My dear friend !—Hollo, Du Peigne ! my hat —my dear Jack—now nothing on earth can give me a moment's uneasiness. 132

Enter FAG

Fag. Sir, Mr. Acres, just arrived, is below.

Abs. Stay, Faulkland, this Acres lives within a mile of Sir Anthony, and he shall tell you how your mistress has been ever since you left her.—Fag, show the gentleman up. [Exit FAG.

Faulk. What, is he much acquainted in the family ?

Abs. Oh, very intimate : I insist on your not going : besides, his character will divert you. 140

Faulk. Well, I should like to ask him a few questions.

Abs. He is likewise a rival of mine—that is, of my *other self's*, for he does not think his friend Captain Absolute ever saw the lady in question ; and it is ridiculous enough to hear him complain to me of *one Beverley*, a concealed skulking rival, who—

Faulk. Hush !—He's here.

Enter ACRES

Acres. Hah ! my dear friend, noble captain, and honest Jack, how do'st thou ? just arrived, faith, as you see.—Sir, your humble servant.—Warm work on the roads, Jack—Odds whips and wheels ! I've travelled like a comet, with a tail of dust all the way as long as the Mall.

153

Abs. Ah ! Bob, you are indeed an eccentric planet, but we know your attraction hither—Give me leave to introduce Mr. Faulkland to you ; Mr. Faulkland, Mr. Acres.

Acres. Sir, I am most heartily glad to see you : Sir, I solicit your connexions.—Hey, Jack—what, this is Mr. Faulkland, who—

160

Abs. Ay, Bob, Miss Melville's Mr. Faulkland.

Acres. Odd so ! she and your father can be but just arrived before me—I suppose you have seen them. Ah ! Mr. Faulkland, you are indeed a happy man.

Faulk. I have not seen Miss Melville yet, sir ;—I hope she enjoyed full health and spirits in Devonshire ?

Acres. Never knew her better in my life, sir,—never better. Odds blushes and blooms ! she has been as healthy as the German Spa.

Faulk. Indeed !—I did hear that she had been a little indisposed.

171

Acres. False, false, sir—only said to vex you : quite the reverse, I assure you.

Faulk. There, Jack, you see she has the advantage of me ; I had almost fretted myself ill.

Abs. Now are you angry with your mistress for not having been sick.

Faulk. No, no, you misunderstand me:—yet surely a little trifling indisposition is not an unnatural consequence of absence from those we love.—Now confess—isn’t there something unkind in this violent, robust, unfeeling health ?

182

Abs. Oh, it was very unkind of her to be well in your absence, to be sure !

Acres. Good apartments, Jack.

Faulk. Well, sir, but you was saying that Miss Melville has been so *exceedingly* well—what then, she has been merry and gay, I suppose?—Always in spirits—hey?

Acres. Merry, odds crickets! she has been the belle and spirit of the company wherever she has been—so lively and entertaining! so full of wit and humour!

Faulk. There, Jack, there.—Oh, by my soul! there is an innate levity in women, that nothing can overcome.—What! happy, and I away!

195

Abs. Have done:—How foolish this is! just now you were only apprehensive for your mistress’s *spirits*.

Faulk. Why, Jack, have I been the joy and spirit of the company?

Abs. No, indeed, you have not.

200

Faulk. Have I been lively and entertaining?

Abs. Oh, upon my word, I acquit you.

Faulk. Have I been full of wit and humour?

Abs. No, faith, to do you justice, you have been confoundedly stupid indeed.

Acres. What’s the matter with the gentleman?

Abs. He is only expressing his great satisfaction at hearing that Julia has been so well and happy—that’s all—hey, Faulkland?

Faulk. Oh ! I am rejoiced to hear it—yes, yes, she has a *happy* disposition !

211

Acres. That she has indeed—then she is so accomplished—so sweet a voice—so expert at her harpsichord—such a mistress of flat and sharp, squallante, rumblante, and quiverante !—there was this time month—Odds minnumbs and crotchets ! how she did chirrup at Mrs. Piano's concert !

Faulk. There again, what say you to this ? you see she has been all mirth and song—not a thought of me !

Abs. Pho ! man, is not music the food of love ?

Faulk. Well, well, it may be so.—Pray, Mr. —, what's his damn'd name !—Do you remember what songs Miss Melville sung ?

223

Acres. Not I indeed.

Abs. Stay now, they were some pretty melancholy purling-stream airs, I warrant ; perhaps you may recollect ;—did she sing, “ When absent from my soul's delight ” ?

Acres. No, that wa'n't it.

Abs. Or, “ Go, gentle gales ! ”—“ Go, gentle gales ! ”—*(Sings.)*

Acres. Oh, no ! nothing like it.—Odds ! now I recollect one of them—“ My heart's my own, my will is free.”—*(Sings.)*

233

Faulk. Fool, fool that I am ! to fix all my happiness on such a trifler ! 'Sdeath ! to make herself the pipe and ballad-monger of a circle ! to soothe her light heart with catches and glee !—What can you say to this, sir ?

Abs. Why, that I should be glad to hear my mistress had been so merry, *sir*.

Faulk. Nay, nay, nay,—I'm not sorry that she has

been happy—no, no, I am glad of that—I would not have had her sad or sick—yet surely a sympathetic heart would have shown itself even in the choice of a song—she might have been temperately healthy, and somehow, plaintively gay ;—but she has been dancing too, I doubt not !

246

Acres. What does the gentleman say about dancing ?

Abs. He says the lady we speak of dances as well as she sings.

Acres. Ay, truly, does she—there was at our last race ball—

251

Faulk. Hell and the devil ! There ! there—I told you so ! I told you so ! Oh ! she thrives in my absence !—Dancing ! but her whole feelings have been in opposition with mine ;—I have been anxious, silent, pensive, sedentary—my days have been hours of care, my nights of watchfulness.—She has been all health ! spirit ! laugh ! song ! dance !—Oh ! damn'd, damn'd levity !

Abs. For Heaven's sake, Faulkland, don't expose yourself so.—Suppose she has danced, what then ?—does not the ceremony of society often oblige—

261

Faulk. Well, well, I'll contain myself—perhaps as you say—for form sake.—What, Mr. Acres, you were praising Miss Melville's manner of dancing a *minuet*—hey ?

Acres. Oh, I dare insure her for that—but what I was going to speak of was her *country-dancing* :—Odds swimmings ! she has such an air with her !

Faulk. Now disappointment on her ! defend this, Absolute ; why don't you defend this ?—Country-dances ! jigs and reels ! am I to blame now ? A minuet I could have forgiven—I should not have minded that—I say I should not have regarded a minuet—but *country-dances* !

—Zounds! had she made one in a *cotillion*—I believe I could have forgiven even that—but to be monkey-led for a night!—to run the gauntlet through a string of amorous palming puppies!—to show paces like a managed filly!—Oh, Jack, there never can be but *one* man in the world, whom a truly modest and delicate woman ought to pair with in a *country-dance*; and even then, the rest of the couples should be her great-uncles and aunts!

Abs. Ay, to be sure!—grandfathers and grandmothers! 282

Faulk. If there be but one vicious mind in the set, 'twill spread like a contagion—the action of their pulse beats to the lascivious movement of the jig—their quivering, warm-breathed sighs impregnate the very air—the atmosphere becomes electrical to love, and each amorous spark darts through every link of the chain!—I must leave you—I own I am somewhat flurried—and that confounded looby has perceived it. (*Going.*)

Abs. Nay, but stay, Faulkland, and thank Mr. Acres for his good news. 292

Faulk. Damn his news! [Exit FAULKLAND.

Abs. Ha! ha! ha! poor Faulkland! five minutes since—“nothing on earth could give him a moment's uneasiness!”

Acres. The gentleman wa'n't angry at my praising his mistress, was he?

Abs. A little jealous, I believe, Bob.

Acres. You don't say so? Ha! ha! jealous of me—that's a good joke. 301

Abs. There's nothing strange in that, Bob; let me tell you, that sprightly grace and insinuating manner of yours will do some mischief among the girls here.

Acres. Ah ! you joke—ha ! ha ! mischief—ha ! ha ! but you know I am not my own property, my dear Lydia has forestalled me.—She could never abide me in the country, because I used to dress so badly—but odds frogs and tambours ! I shan't take matters so here—now ancient madam has no voice in it—I'll make my old clothes know who's master—I shall straightway cashier the hunting-frock—and render my leather breeches incapable—My hair has been in training some time. 313

Abs. Indeed !

Acres. Ay—and thoff the side curls are a little restive, my hind-part takes it very kindly.

Abs. Oh, you'll polish, I doubt not.

Acres. Absolutely I propose so—then if I can find out this Ensign Beverley, odds triggers and flints ! I'll make him know the difference o't. 320

Abs. Spoke like a man—but pray, Bob, I observe you have got an odd kind of a new method of swearing—

Acres. Ha ! ha ! you've taken notice of it—'tis genteel, isn't it ?—I didn't invent it myself though ; but a commander in our militia—a great scholar, I assure you—says that there is no meaning in the common oaths, and that nothing but their antiquity makes them respectable ;—because, he says, the ancients would never stick to an oath or two, but would say, by Jove ! or by Bacchus ! or by Mars ! or by Venus ! or by Pallas ! according to the sentiment—so that to swear with propriety, says my little major, the “oath should be an echo to the sense” ; and this we call the *oath referential*, or *sentimental swearing*—ha ! ha ! ha ! 'tis genteel, isn't it ? 334

Abs. Very genteel, and very new indeed—and I dare-say will supplant all other figures of imprecation.

Acres. Ay, ay, the best terms will grow obsolete—
Damns have had their day.

Enter FAG

Fag. Sir, there is a gentleman below desires to see you
—Shall I show him into the parlour ? 340

Abs. Ay—you may.

Acres. Well, I must be gone—

Abs. Stay ; who is it, Fag ?

Fag. Your father, sir.

Abs. You puppy, why didn't you show him up directly?

[*Exit FAG.*

Acres. You have business with Sir Anthony.—I
expect a message from Mrs. Malaprop at my lodgings—
I have sent also to my dear friend Sir Lucius O'Trigger.—
Adieu, Jack, we must meet at night, when you shall give
me a dozen bumpers to little Lydia. 350

Abs. That I will with all my heart. [*Exit ACRES.*
Now for a parental lecture—I hope he has heard nothing
of the business that has brought me here—I wish the gout
had held him fast in Devonshire, with all my soul !

Enter Sir ANTHONY

Sir, I am delighted to see you here ; and looking so well !
your sudden arrival at Bath made me apprehensive for
your health.

Sir Anth. Very apprehensive, I daresay, Jack.—What,
you are recruiting here, hey ?

Abs. Yes, sir, I am on duty. 360

Sir Anth. Well, Jack, I am glad to see you, though I
did not expect it, for I was going to write to you on a little
matter of business.—Jack, I have been considering that

I grow old and infirm, and shall probably not trouble you long.

Abs. Pardon me, sir, I never saw you look more strong and hearty ; and I pray frequently that you may continue so.

Sir Anth. I hope your prayers may be heard, with all my heart. Well then, Jack, I have been considering that I am so strong and hearty, I may continue to plague you a long time.—Now, Jack, I am sensible that the income of your commission, and what I have hitherto allowed you, is but a small pittance for a lad of your spirit. 374

Abs. Sir, you are very good.

Sir Anth. And it is my wish, while yet I live, to have my boy make some figure in the world. I have resolved, therefore, to fix you at once in a noble independence.

Abs. Sir, your kindness overpowers me—such generosity makes the gratitude of reason more lively than the sensations even of filial affection. 381

Sir Anth. I am glad you are so sensible of my attention—and you shall be master of a large estate in a few weeks.

Abs. Let my future life, sir, speak my gratitude ; I cannot express the sense I have of your munificence.—Yet, sir, I presume you would not wish me to quit the army ?

Sir Anth. Oh, that shall be as your wife chooses.

Abs. My wife, sir !

Sir Anth. Ay, ay, settle that between you—settle that between you. 390

Abs. A wife, sir, did you say ?

Sir Anth. Ay, a wife—why, did not I mention her before ?

Abs. Not a word of her, sir.

Sir Anth. Odd so !—I mustn't forget *her* though.—

Yes, Jack, the independence I was talking of is by a marriage—the fortune is saddled with a wife—but I suppose that makes no difference.

Abs. Sir ! sir !—you amaze me !

Sir Anth. Why, what the devil's the matter with the fool ? Just now you were all gratitude and duty. 401

Abs. I was, sir,—you talked to me of independence and a fortune, but not a word of a wife.

Sir Anth. Why—what difference does that make ? Odds life, sir ! if you have the estate, you must take it with the live stock on it, as it stands.

Abs. If my happiness is to be the price, I must beg leave to decline the purchase.—Pray, sir, who is the lady ? 409

Sir Anth. What's that to you, sir ?—Come, give me your promise to love, and to marry her directly.

Abs. Sure, sir, this is not very reasonable, to summon my affections for a lady I know nothing of !

Sir Anth. I am sure, sir, 'tis more unreasonable in you to *object* to a lady you know nothing of.

Abs. Then, sir, I must tell you plainly, that my inclinations are fixed on another—my heart is engaged to an angel.

Sir Anth. Then pray let it send an excuse.—It is very sorry—but *business* prevents its waiting on her. 420

Abs. But my vows are pledged to her.

Sir Anth. Let her foreclose, Jack ; let her foreclose ; they are not worth redeeming ; besides, you have the angel's vows in exchange, I suppose ; so there can be no loss there.

Abs. You must excuse me, sir, if I tell you, once for all, that in this point I cannot obey you.

Sir Anth. Hark'ee, Jack ;—I have heard you for some time with patience—I have been cool—quite cool ; but take care—you know I am compliance itself—when I am not thwarted ;—no one more easily led—when I have my own way ;—but don't put me in a frenzy. 432

Abs. Sir, I must repeat it—in this I cannot obey you.

Sir Anth. Now damn me ! if ever I call you *Jack* again while I live !

Abs. Nay, sir, but hear me.

Sir Anth. Sir, I won't hear a word—not a word ! not one word ! so give me your promise by a nod—and I'll tell you what, Jack—I mean, you dog—if you don't, by— 440

Abs. What, sir, promise to link myself to some mass of ugliness ! to—

Sir Anth. Zounds ! sirrah ! the lady shall be as ugly as I choose : she shall have a hump on each shoulder ; she shall be as crooked as the Crescent ; her one eye shall roll like the bull's in Cox's Museum ; she shall have a skin like a mummy, and the beard of a Jew—she shall be all this, sirrah !—yet I will make you ogle her all day, and sit up all night to write sonnets on her beauty.

Abs. This is reason and moderation indeed ! 450

Sir Anth. None of your sneering, puppy ! no grinning, jackanapes !

Abs. Indeed, sir, I never was in a worse humour for mirth in my life.

Sir Anth. 'Tis false, sir, I know you are laughing in your sleeve ; I know you'll grin when I am gone, sirrah !

Abs. Sir, I hope I know my duty better.

Sir Anth. None of your passion, sir ! none of your

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Sir Anthony. Now damn me! if ever I call you *Jack* again!

violence ; if you please—It won't do with me, I promise you.

461

Abs. Indeed, sir, I never was cooler in my life.

Sir Anth. 'Tis a confounded lie !—I know you are in a passion in your heart ; I know you are, you hypocritical young dog ! but it won't do.

Abs. Nay, sir, upon my word.

Sir Anth. So you will fly out ! can't you be cool like me ? What the devil good can passion do ?—Passion is of no service, you impudent, insolent, overbearing reprobate !—There you sneer again !—don't provoke me !—but you rely upon the mildness of my temper—you do, you dog ! you play upon the meekness of my disposition ! Yet take care—the patience of a saint may be overcome at last !—but mark ! I give you six hours and a half to consider of this : if you then agree, without any condition, to do everything on earth that I choose, why—confound you ! I may in time forgive you—If not, zounds ! don't enter the same hemisphere with me ! don't dare to breathe the same air, or use the same light with me ; but get an atmosphere and a sun of your own ! I'll strip you of your commission ; I'll lodge a five-and-threepence in the hands of trustees, and you shall live on the interest.—I'll disown you, I'll disinherit you, I'll unget you ! and damn me ! if ever I call you Jack again !

484

[*Exit Sir ANTHONY.*

ABSOLUTE *solus*

Abs. Mild, gentle, considerate father—I kiss your hands.—What a tender method of giving his opinion in these matters Sir Anthony has ! I dare not trust him with the truth.—I wonder what old wealthy hag it is that

he wants to bestow on me!—yet he married himself for love! and was in his youth a bold intriguer, and a gay companion!

491

Enter FAG

Fay. Assuredly, sir, your father is wroth to a degree; he comes downstairs eight or ten steps at a time—muttering, growling, and thumping the banisters all the way: I and the cook's dog stand bowing at the door—rap! he gives me a stroke on the head with his cane; bids me carry that to my master; then kicking the poor turnspit into the area, damns us all, for a puppy triumvirate!—Upon my credit, sir, were I in your place, and found my father such very bad company, I should certainly drop his acquaintance.

501

Abs. Cease your impertinence, sir, at present.—Did you come in for nothing more?—Stand out of the way!

[Pushes him aside, and exit.

FAG solus

Fag. Soh! Sir Anthony trims my master: he is afraid to reply to his father—then vents his spleen on poor Fag!—When one is vexed by one person, to revenge one's self on another, who happens to come in the way, is the vilest injustice! Ah! it shows the worst temper—the basest—

Enter ERRAND BOY

Boy. Mr. Fag! Mr. Fag! your master calls you.

Fag. Well! you little dirty puppy, you need not bawl so!—The meanest disposition! the—

512

Boy. Quick, quick, Mr. Fag.

Fag. Quick! quick! you impudent jackanapes! am

I to be commanded by you too ? you little, impertinent, insolent, kitchen-bred—

[Exit kicking and beating him.

SCENE II.—*The North Parade*

Enter LUCY

Lucy. So—I shall have another rival to add to my mistress's list—Captain Absolute. However, I shall not enter his name till my purse has received notice in form. Poor Acres is dismissed !—Well, I have done him a last friendly office, in letting him know that Beverley was here before him.—Sir Lucius is generally more punctual, when he expects to hear from his *dear Dalia*, as he calls her : I wonder he's not here !—I have a little scruple of conscience from this deceit ; though I should not be paid so well, if my hero knew that *Delia* was near fifty, and her own mistress.

11

Enter Sir LUCIUS O'TRIGGER

Sir Luc. Hah ! my little ambassadress—upon my conscience, I have been looking for you ; I have been on the South Parade this half hour.

Lucy. (*Speaking simply.*) O Gemini ! and I have been waiting for your worship here on the North.

Sir Luc. Faith !—may be, that was the reason we did not meet ; and it is very comical too, how you could go out and I not see you—for I was only taking a nap at the Parade Coffee-house, and I chose the *window* on purpose that I might not miss you.

21

Lucy. My stars ! Now I'd wager a sixpence I went by while you were asleep.

Sir Luc. Sure enough it must have been so—and I never dreamt it was so late, till I waked. Well, but my little girl, have you got nothing for me?

Lucy. Yes, but I have—I've got a letter for you in my pocket.

Sir Luc. Oh, faith! I guessed you weren't come empty-handed—well—let me see what the dear creature says.

31

Lucy. There, Sir Lucius. (Gives him a letter.)

Sir Luc. (Reads) "*Sir—there is often a sudden incentive impulse in love, that has a greater induction than years of domestic combination: such was the commotion I felt at the first superfluous view of Sir Lucius O'Trigger.*"—Very pretty, upon my word.—"*Female punctuation forbids me to say more; yet let me add, that it will give me joy infallible to find Sir Lucius worthy the last criterion of my affections.*

DELIA."

Upon my conscience! Lucy, your lady is a great mistress of language. Faith, she's quite the queen of the dictionary!—for the devil a word dare refuse coming at her call—though one would think it was quite out of hearing.

44
Lucy. Ay, sir, a lady of her experience.

Sir Luc. Experience? what, at seventeen?

Lucy. Oh true, sir—but then she reads so—my stars! how she will read off hand!

Sir Luc. Faith, she must be very deep read to write this way—though she is rather an arbitrary writer too—for here are a great many poor words pressed into the service of this note, that would get their *habeas corpus* from any court in Christendom.

53

Lucy. Ah! Sir Lucius, if you were to hear how she talks of you!

Sir Luc. Oh, tell her I'll make her the best husband in the world, and Lady O'Trigger into the bargain!—But we must get the old gentlewoman's consent—and do everything fairly.

Lucy. Nay, Sir Lucius, I thought you wa'n't rich enough to be so nice! 61

Sir Luc. Upon my word, young woman, you have hit it:—I am so poor, that I can't afford to do a dirty action.—If I did not want money, I'd steal your mistress and her fortune with a great deal of pleasure.—However, my pretty girl (*gives her money*), here's a little something to buy you a riband; and meet me in the evening, and I'll give you an answer to this. So, hussy, take a kiss beforehand, to put you in mind. (*Kisses her*.)

Lucy. O Lud! Sir Lucius—I never seed such a gemman! My lady won't like you if you're so impudent. 71

Sir Luc. Faith she will, Lucy—that same—pho! what's the name of it?—*Modesty!*—is a quality in a lover more praised by the women than liked; so, if your mistress asks you whether Sir Lucius ever gave you a kiss, tell her fifty—my dear.

Lucy. What, would you have me tell her a lie?

Sir Luc. Ah then, you baggage! I'll make it a truth presently.

Lucy. For shame now; here is some one coming. 80

Sir Luc. Oh, faith, I'll quiet your conscience!

[*Sees Fag.*—*Exit, humming a tune.*

Enter Fag

Fag. So, so, ma'am. I humbly beg pardon.

Lucy. O Lud! now, Mr. Fag—you flurry one so.

Fag. Come, come, Lucy, here's no one by—so a little

less simplicity, with a grain or two more sincerity, if you please.—You play false with us, madam.—I saw you give the baronet a letter.—My master shall know this—and if he don't call him out, I will.

Lucy. Ha ! ha ! ha ! you gentlemen's gentlemen are so hasty.—That letter was from Mrs. Malaprop, simpleton.—She is taken with Sir Lucius's address. 91

Fag. How ! what tastes some people have !—Why, I suppose I have walked by her window an hundred times.—But what says our young lady ? Any message to my master ?

Lucy. Sad news ! Mr. Fag.—A worse rival than Acres ! Sir Anthony Absolute has proposed his son.

Fag. What, Captain Absolute ?

Lucy. Even so—I overheard it all.

Fag. Ha ! ha ! ha ! very good, faith. Good-bye, Lucy, I must away with this news. 101

Lucy. Well, you may laugh—but it is true, I assure you. (*Going.*) But—Mr. Fag—tell your master not to be cast down by this.

Fag. Oh, he'll be so disconsolate !

Lucy. And charge him not to think of quarrelling with young Absolute.

Fag. Never fear !—never fear !

Lucy. Be sure—bid him keep up his spirits.

Fag. We will—we will. [*Exeunt severally.*]

ACT III

SCENE I.—*The North Parade*

Enter ABSOLUTE

Abs. 'Tis just as Fag told me, indeed.—Whimsical enough, faith ! My father wants to *force* me to marry the very girl I am plotting to run away with !—He must not know of my connexion with her yet awhile.—He has too summary a method of proceeding in these matters.—However, I'll read my recantation instantly.—My conversion is something sudden, indeed—but I can assure him it is very *sincere*.—So, so,—here he comes.—He looks plaguy gruff.

[Steps aside.]

Enter Sir ANTHONY

Sir Anth. No—I'll die sooner than forgive him.—*Die*, did I say ? I'll live these fifty years to plague him.—At our last meeting, his impudence had almost put me out of temper.—An obstinate, passionate, self-willed boy !—Who can he take after ? This is my return for getting him before all his brothers and sisters !—for putting him, at twelve years old, into a marching regiment, and allowing him fifty pounds a year, besides his pay, ever since !—But I have done with him ;—he's anybody's son for me.—I never will see him more,—never—never—never—never.

20

Abs. Now for a penitential face.

45

Sir Anth. Fellow, get out of my way.

Abs. Sir, you see a penitent before you.

Sir Anth. I see an impudent scoundrel before me.

Abs. A sincere penitent.—I am come, sir, to acknowledge my error, and to submit entirely to your will.

Sir Anth. What's that?

Abs. I have been revolving, and reflecting, and considering on your past goodness, and kindness, and condescension to me. 30

Sir Anth. Well, sir?

Abs. I have been likewise weighing and balancing what you were pleased to mention concerning duty, and obedience, and authority.

Sir Anth. Well, puppy?

Abs. Why then, sir, the result of my reflections is—a resolution to sacrifice every inclination of my own to your satisfaction.

Sir Anth. Why, now you talk sense—absolute sense—I never heard anything more sensible in my life.—Confound you! you shall be Jack again. 41

Abs. I am happy in the appellation.

Sir Anth. Why then, Jack, my dear Jack, I will now inform you who the lady really is.—Nothing but your passion and violence, you silly fellow, prevented my telling you at first. Prepare, Jack, for wonder and rapture—prepare.—What think you of Miss Lydia Languish?

Abs. Languish? What, the Languishes of Worcestershire?

Sir Anth. Worcestershire! No. Did you never meet Mrs. Malaprop and her niece, Miss Languish, who came into our country just before you were last ordered to your regiment? 53



Sir Anthony, I see an impudent scoundrel before me.

I see you want

Abs. Malaprop ! Languish ! I don't remember ever to have heard the names before. Yet, stay—I think I do recollect something.—*Languish ! Languish !* She squints, don't she ?—A little red-haired girl ?

Sir Anth. Squints !—A red-haired girl !—Zounds ! no.

Abs. Then I must have forgot ; it can't be the same person. 61

Sir Anth. Jack ! Jack ! what think you of blooming, love-breathing seventeen ?

Abs. As to that, sir, I am quite indifferent.—If I can please you in the matter, 'tis all I desire.

Sir Anth. Nay, but, Jack, such eyes ! such eyes ! so innocently wild ! so bashfully irresolute ! Not a glance but speaks and kindles some thought of love !—Then, Jack, her cheeks ! her cheeks, Jack ! so deeply blushing at the insinuations of her tell-tale eyes !—Then, Jack, her lips ! Oh Jack, lips smiling at their own discretion ; and if not smiling, more sweetly pouting ; more lovely in sullenness ! 73

Abs. That's she indeed.—Well done, old gentleman !

[*Aside.*]

Sir Anth. Then, Jack, her neck !—Oh, Jack ! Jack !

Abs. And which is to be mine, sir, the niece or the aunt ?

Sir Anth. Why, you unfeeling, insensible puppy, I despise you. When I was of your age, such a description would have made me fly like a rocket ! The *aunt*, indeed !—Odds life ! when I ran away with your mother, I would not have touched anything old or ugly to gain an empire.

Abs. Not to please your father, sir ? 83

Sir Anth. To please my father !—Zounds ! not to

please—Oh, my father—Odd so!—yes—yes; if my father indeed had desired—that's quite another matter.—Though he wa'n't the indulgent father that I am, Jack.

Abs. I daresay not, sir.

Sir Anth. But, Jack, you are not sorry to find your mistress is so beautiful? 91

Abs. Sir, I repeat it—if I please you in this affair, 'tis all I desire. Not that I think a woman the worse for being handsome; but, sir, if you please to recollect, you before hinted something about a hump or two, one eye, and a few more graces of that kind—now, without being very nice, I own I should rather choose a wife of mine to have the usual number of limbs, and a limited quantity of back: and though *one* eye may be very agreeable, yet as the prejudice has always run in favour of *two*, I would not wish to affect a singularity in that article. 101

Sir Anth. What a phlegmatic sot it is! Why, sirrah, you're an anchorite!—a vile, insensible stock.—You a soldier!—you're a walking block, fit only to dust the company's regimentals on!—Odds life! I've a great mind to marry the girl myself!

Abs. I am entirely at your disposal, sir: if you should think of addressing Miss Languish yourself, I suppose you would have me marry the *aunt*; or if you should change your mind, and take the old lady—'tis the same to me—I'll marry the *niece*. 111

Sir Anth. Upon my word, Jack, thou'rt either a very great hypocrite, or—but, come, I know your indifference on such a subject must be all a lie—I'm sure it must—come, now—damn your demure face!—come, confess, Jack—you have been lying—ha'n't you? You have been

playing the hypocrite, hey?—I'll never forgive you, if you ha'n't been lying and playing the hypocrite.

Abs. I'm sorry, sir, that the respect and duty which I bear to you should be so mistaken. 120

Sir Anth. Hang your respect and duty! But come along with me, I'll write a note to Mrs. Malaprop, and you shall visit the lady directly. Her eyes shall be the Promethean torch to you,—come along, I'll never forgive you, if you don't come back stark mad with rapture and impatience—if you don't, egad, I'll marry the girl myself!

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE II.—JULIA'S *Dressing-room*

FAULKLAND *solus*

Faulk. They told me Julia would return directly; I wonder she is not yet come!—How mean does this captious, unsatisfied temper of mine appear to my cooler judgment! Yet I know not that I indulge it in any other point:—but on this one subject, and to this one subject, whom I think I love beyond my life, I am ever ungenerously fretful and madly capricious!—I am conscious of it—yet I cannot correct myself! What tender honest joy sparkled in her eyes when we met!—How delicate was the warmth of her expressions!—I was ashamed to appear less happy—though I had come resolved to wear a face of coolness and upbraiding. Sir Anthony's presence prevented my proposed expostulations:—yet I must be satisfied that she has not been so *very* happy in my absence.—She is coming!—Yes!—I know the nimbleness of her tread, when she thinks her impatient Faulkland counts the moments of her stay.

17

Enter JULIA

Julia. I had not hoped to see you again so soon.

Faulk. Could I, Julia, be contented with my first welcome—restrained as we were by the presence of a third person ? 21

Julia. Oh, Faulkland, when your kindness can make me thus happy, let me not think that I discovered something of coldness in your first salutation.

Faulk. 'Twas but your fancy, Julia.—I *was* rejoiced to see you—to see you in such health—Sure I had no cause for coldness ?

Julia. Nay then, I see you have taken something ill.—You must not conceal from me what it is.

Faulk. Well, then—shall I own to you that my joy at hearing of your health and arrival here, by your neighbour Acres, was somewhat damped by his dwelling much on the high spirits you had enjoyed in Devonshire—on your mirth—your singing—dancing, and I know not what !—For such is my temper, Julia, that I should regard every mirthful moment in your absence as a treason to constancy :—The mutual tear that steals down the cheek of parting lovers is a compact, that no smile shall live there till they meet again.

Julia. Must I never cease to tax my Faulkland with this teasing minute caprice ?—Can the idle reports of a silly boor weigh in your breast against my tried affection ?

Faulk. They have no weight with me, Julia : No, no—I am happy if you have been so—yet only say, that you did not sing with *mirth*—say that you *thought* of Faulkland in the dance. 46

Julia. I never can be happy in your absence.—If I

wear a countenance of content, it is to show that my mind holds no doubt of my Faulkland's truth.—If I seemed sad, it were to make malice triumph ; and say, that I had fixed my heart on one, who left me to lament his roving, and my own credulity.—Believe me, Faulkland, I mean not to upbraid you, when I say, that I have often dressed sorrow in smiles, lest my friends should guess whose unkindness had caused my tears. 55

Faulk. You were ever all goodness to me.—Oh, I am a brute, when I but admit a doubt of your true constancy !

Julia. If ever without such cause from you, as I will not suppose possible, you find my affections veering but a point, may I become a proverbial scoff for levity and base ingratitude. 61

Faulk. Ah ! Julia, that last word is grating to me. I would I had no title to your *gratitude* ! Search your heart, Julia ; perhaps what you have mistaken for love, is but the warm effusion of a too thankful heart !

Julia. For what quality must I love you ?

Faulk. For no quality ! To regard me for any quality of mind or understanding, were only to *esteem* me. And for person—I have often wished myself deformed, to be convinced that I owed no obligation *there* for any part of your affection. 71

Julia. Where nature has bestowed a show of nice attention in the features of a man, he should laugh at it as misplaced. I have seen men, who in *this* vain article, perhaps, might rank above you ; but my heart has never asked my eyes if it were so or not.

Faulk. Now this is not well from *you*, Julia,—I despise person in a man—yet, if you loved me as I wish, though I were an *Aethiop*, you'd think none so fair.

Julia. I see you are determined to be unkind—The contract which my poor father bound us in gives you more than a lover's privilege. 82

Faulk. Again, Julia, you raise ideas that feed and justify my doubts.—I would not have been more free—no—I am proud of my restraint.—Yet—yet—perhaps your high respect alone for this solemn compact has fettered your inclinations, which else had made a worthier choice.—How shall I be sure, had you remained unbound in thought and promise, that I should still have been the object of your persevering love ? 90

Julia. Then try me now.—Let us be free as strangers as to what is past :—my heart will not feel more liberty !

Faulk. There now ! so hasty, Julia ! so anxious to be free !—If your love for me were fixed and ardent, you would not loose your hold, even though I wished it !

Julia. Oh ! you torture me to the heart ! I cannot bear it.

Faulk. I do not mean to distress you.—If I loved you less, I should never give you an uneasy moment.—But hear me.—All my fretful doubts arise from this.—Women are not used to weigh, and separate the motives of their affections : the cold dictates of prudence, gratitude, or filial duty, may sometimes be mistaken for the pleadings of the heart.—I would not boast—yet let me say, that I have neither age, person, nor character, to found dislike on ;—my fortune such as few ladies could be charged with indiscretion in the match.—Oh, Julia ! when *Love* receives such countenance from *Prudence*, nice minds will be suspicious of its birth. 109

Julia. I know not whither your insinuations would tend :—But as they seem pressing to insult me, I will

spare you the regret of having done so.—I have given you no cause for this. [Exit in tears.]

Faulk. In tears ! Stay, Julia : stay but for a moment.—The door is fastened !—Julia !—my soul—but for one moment : I hear her sobbing !—'Sdeath ! what a brute am I to use her thus ! Yet stay.—Ay—she is coming now :—how little resolution there is in woman !—how a few soft words can turn them !—No, faith !—she is *not* coming either.—Why, Julia—my love—say but that you forgive me—come but to tell me that—now this is being *too* resentful : stay ! she is coming too—I thought she would—no *steadiness* in anything ! her going away must have been a mere trick then—she shan't see that I was hurt by it.—I'll affect indifference—(hums a tune ; then listens)—No—Zounds ! she's *not* coming !—nor don't intend it, I suppose.—This is not *steadiness* but *obstinacy* ! Yet I deserve it.—What, after so long an absence to quarrel with her tenderness !—'twas barbarous and unmanly !—I should be ashamed to see her now.—I'll wait till her just resentment is abated—and when I distress her so again, may I lose her for ever ! and be linked instead to some antique virago, whose gnawing passions and long-hoarded spleen, shall make me curse my folly half the day and all the night. [Exit.]

SCENE III.—MRS. MALAPROP'S *Lodgings*

MRS. MALAPROP, with a letter in her hand, and
Captain ABSOLUTE

Mrs. Mal. Your being Sir Anthony's son, captain, would itself be a sufficient accommodation ; but from the

ingenuity of your appearance, I am convinced you deserve the character here given of you.

Abs. Permit me to say, madam, that as I never yet have had the pleasure of seeing Miss Languish, my principal inducement in this affair at present is the honour of being allied to Mrs. Malaprop ; of whose intellectual accomplishments, elegant manners, and unaffected learning, no tongue is silent. 10

Mrs. Mal. Sir, you do me infinite honour !—I beg, captain, you'll be seated.—(*Sit.*)—Ah ! few gentlemen, nowadays, know how to value the ineffectual qualities in a woman ! few think how a little knowledge becomes a gentlewoman !—Men have no sense now but for the worthless flower of beauty !

Abs. It is but too true indeed, ma'am ;—yet I fear our ladies should share the blame—they think our admiration of *beauty* so great, that *knowledge* in *them* would be superfluous. Thus, like garden-trees, they seldom show fruit, till time has robbed them of the more specious blossom.—Few, like Mrs. Malaprop and the orange-tree, are rich in both at once ! 23

Mrs. Mal. Sir, you overpower me with good-breeding —He is the very pine-apple of politeness ! You are not ignorant, captain, that this giddy girl has somehow contrived to fix her affections on a beggarly, strolling, eaves-dropping ensign, whom none of us have seen, and nobody knows anything of.

Abs. Oh, I have heard the silly affair before.—I'm not at all prejudiced against her on *that* account. 31

Mrs. Mal. You are very good and very considerate, captain.—I am sure I have done everything in my power since I exploded the affair ; long ago I laid my positive

conjunctions on her, never to think on the fellow again ;—I have since laid Sir Anthony's preposition before her ; but, I am sorry to say, she seems resolved to decline every particle that I enjoin her.

Abs. It must be very distressing indeed, ma'am.

Mrs. Mal. Oh ! it gives me the hydrostatics to such a degree ;—I thought she had persisted from corresponding with him ; but, behold, this very day, I have interceded another letter from the fellow ; I believe I have it in my pocket. 44

Abs. Oh, the devil ! my last note.

[*Aside.*]

Mrs. Mal. Ay, here it is.

Abs. Ay, my note indeed ! Oh, the little traitress Lucy ! [*Aside.*]

Mrs. Mal. There, perhaps you may know the writing.

[*Gives him the letter.*]

Abs. I think I have seen the hand before—yes, I certainly must have seen this hand before— 51

Mrs. Mal. Nay, but read it, captain.

Abs. (*Reads.*) “*My soul's idol, my adored Lydia !*”—Very tender indeed !

Mrs. Mal. Tender ! ay, and profane too, o' my conscience !

Abs. “*I am excessively alarmed at the intelligence you send me, the more so as my new rival—*”

Mrs. Mal. That's you, sir.

Abs. “*Has universally the character of being an accomplished gentleman, and a man of honour.*”—Well, that's handsome enough. 62

Mrs. Mal. Oh, the fellow has some design in writing so.

Abs. That he had, I'll answer for him, ma'am.

Mrs. Mal. But go on, sir,—you'll see presently.

Abs. "As for the old weather-beaten she-dragon who guards you"—Who can he mean by that?

Mrs. Mal. Me, sir—me—he means *me* there—what do you think now?—but go on a little farther.

Abs. Impudent scoundrel!—"it shall go hard but I will elude her vigilance, as I am told that the same ridiculous vanity, which makes her dress up her coarse features, and deck her dull chat with hard words which she don't understand"—

74

Mrs. Mal. There, sir, an attack upon my language! what do you think of that?—an aspersion upon my parts of speech! was ever such a brute! Sure if I reprehend anything in this world, it is the use of my oracular tongue, and a nice derangement of epitaphs!

Abs. He deserves to be hanged and quartered! let me see—"same ridiculous vanity"—

81

Mrs. Mal. You need not read it again, sir.

Abs. I beg pardon, ma'am—"does also lay her open to the grossest deceptions from flattery and pretended admiration"—an impudent coxcomb!—"so that I have a scheme to see you shortly with the old harridan's consent, and even to make her a go-between in our interview."—Was ever such assurance!

Mrs. Mal. Did you ever hear anything like it?—he'll elude my vigilance, will he—yes, yes! ha! ha! he's very likely to enter these doors!—we'll try who can plot best!

Abs. So we will, ma'am—so we will.—Ha! ha! ha! a conceited puppy, ha! ha! ha!—Well, but Mrs. Malaprop, as the girl seems so infatuated by this fellow, suppose you were to wink at her corresponding with him for a little time—let her even plot an elopement with him—then do you connive at her escape—while *I*, just in

the nick, will have the fellow laid by the heels, and fairly contrive to carry her off in his stead.

Mrs. Mal. I am delighted with the scheme ; never was anything better perpetrated ! 101

Abs. But, pray, could not I see the lady for a few minutes now ?—I should like to try her temper a little.

Mrs. Mal. Why, I don't know—I doubt she is not prepared for a visit of this kind.—There is a decorum in these matters.

Abs. Oh, Lord ! she won't mind *me*—only tell her Beverley—

Mrs. Mal. Sir !

Abs. Gently, good tongue.

[*Aside.*]

Mrs. Mal. What did you say of Beverley ? 111

Abs. Oh, I was going to propose that you should tell her, by way of jest, that it was Beverley who was below—she'd come down fast enough then—ha ! ha ! ha !

Mrs. Mal. 'Twould be a trick she well deserves—besides, you know the fellow tells her he'll get my consent to see her—ha ! ha !—Let him if he can, I say again.—Lydia, come down here !—(*Calling.*)—He'll make me a *go-between in their interviews* !—ha ! ha ! ha !—Come down, I say, Lydia ! I don't wonder at your laughing, ha ! ha ! ha ! his impudence is truly ridiculous. 121

Abs. 'Tis very ridiculous, upon my soul, ma'am, ha ! ha ! ha !

Mrs. Mal. The little hussy won't hear.—Well, I'll go and tell her at once who it is—she shall know that Captain Absolute is come to wait on her.— And I'll make her behave as becomes a young woman.

Abs. As you please, ma'am.

Mrs. Mal. For the present, captain, your servant—

Ah!—you've not done laughing yet, I see—*elude my vigilance!* yes, yes; ha! ha! ha! [Exit.

Abs. Ha! ha! ha! one would think now that I might throw off all disguise at once, and seize my prize with security—but such is Lydia's caprice, that to undeceive were probably to lose her.—I'll see whether she knows me. 136

[Walks aside, and seems engaged in looking at the pictures.

Enter LYDIA

Lydia. What a scene am I now to go through! surely nothing can be more dreadful than to be obliged to listen to the loathsome addresses of a stranger to one's heart.—I have heard of girls persecuted as I am, who have appealed in behalf of their favoured lover to the generosity of his rival: suppose I were to try it—there stands the hated rival—an officer too!—but oh, how unlike my Beverley!—I wonder he don't begin—truly he seems a very negligent wooer!—quite at his ease, upon my word!—I'll speak first—Mr. Absolute.

Abs. Ma'am.

[Turns round.

Lydia. Oh, heavens! Beverley!

Abs. Hush!—hush, my life! softly! be not surprised!

Lydia. I am so astonished! and so terrified! and so overjoyed!—for heaven's sake! how came you here? 151

Abs. Briefly, I have deceived your aunt—I was informed that my new rival was to visit here this evening, and contriving to have him kept away, have passed myself on *her* for Captain Absolute.

Lydia. Oh, charming!—And she really takes you for young Absolute?

Abs. Oh, she's convinced of it.

Lydia. Ha ! ha ! ha ! I can't forbear laughing to think how her sagacity is overreached ! 160

Abs. But we trifle with our precious moments—such another opportunity may not occur—then let me now conjure my kind, my condescending angel, to fix the time when I may rescue her from undeserving persecution, and with a licensed warmth plead for my reward.

Lydia. Will you then, Beverley, consent to forfeit that portion of my paltry wealth ?—that burden on the wings of love ?

Abs. Oh, come to me—rich only thus—in loveliness—Bring no portion to me but thy love—'twill be generous in you, Lydia—for well you know, it is the only dower your poor Beverley can repay. 172

Lydia. How persuasive are his words !—how charming will poverty be with him !

Abs. Ah ! my soul, what a life will we then live ! Love shall be our idol and support ! we will worship him with a monastic strictness ; abjuring all worldly toys, to centre every thought and action there.—Proud of calamity, we will enjoy the wreck of wealth ; while the surrounding gloom of adversity shall make the flame of our pure love show doubly bright—By heavens ! I would fling all goods of fortune from me with a prodigal hand, to enjoy the scene where I might clasp my Lydia to my bosom, and say, the world affords no smile to me but here—

[Embracing her.]

If she holds out now, the devil is in it ! [Aside.]

Lydia. Now could I fly with him to the antipodes ! but my persecution is not yet come to a crisis.

Enter Mrs. MALAPROP, listening

Mrs. Mal. I am impatient to know how the little hussy deports herself. [Aside.

Abs. So pensive, Lydia!—is then your warmth abated?

Mrs. Mal. Warmth abated!—so!—she has been in a passion, I suppose. 193

Lydia. No—nor ever can while I have life.

Mrs. Mal. An ill-tempered little devil!—She'll be in a passion all her life—will she?

Lydia. Think not the idle threats of my ridiculous aunt can ever have any weight with me.

Mrs. Mal. Very dutiful, upon my word!

Lydia. Let her choice be Captain Absolute, but Beverley is mine. 201

Mrs. Mal. I am astonished at her assurance!—to his face—this is to his face!

Abs. Thus then let me enforce my suit. [Kneeling.

Mrs. Mal. Ay, poor young man!—down on his knees entreating for pity!—I can contain no longer.—Why, thou vixen!—I have overheard you.

Abs. Oh, confound her vigilance! [Aside.

Mrs. Mal. Captain Absolute, I know not how to apologise for her shocking rudeness. 210

Abs. So—all's safe, I find. [Aside.
I have hopes, madam, that time will bring the young lady—

Mrs. Mal. Oh, there's nothing to be hoped for from her! she's as headstrong as an allegory on the banks of Nile.

Lydia. Nay, madam, what do you charge me with now?

Mrs. Mal. Why, thou unblushing rebel—didn't you



Mrs. Mal. Ay, poor young man!—down on his knees entreating
for pity!

tell this gentleman to his face that you loved another better?—didn't you say you never would be his? 220

Lydia. No, madam—I did not.

Mrs. Mal. Good heavens! what assurance!—Lydia, Lydia, you ought to know that lying don't become a young woman!—Didn't you boast that Beverley, that stroller Beverley, possessed your heart?—Tell me that, I say.

Lydia. 'Tis true, ma'am, and none but Beverley—

Mrs. Mal. Hold!—hold, Assurance!—you shall not be so rude.

Abs. Nay, pray, Mrs. Malaprop, don't stop the young lady's speech:—she's very welcome to talk thus—it does not hurt *me* in the least, I assure you. 232

Mrs. Mal. You are *too* good, captain—*too* amiably patient—but come with me, miss.—Let us see you again soon, captain—remember what we have fixed.

Abs. I shall, ma'am.

Mrs. Mal. Come, take a graceful leave of the gentleman.

Lydia. May every blessing wait on my Beverley, my loved Bev— 240

Mrs. Mal. Hussy! I'll choke the word in your throat!—come along—come along.

[*Exeunt severally.* ABSOLUTE kissing his hand to LYDIA—*Mrs. MALAPROP* stopping her from speaking.

SCENE IV.—ACRES'S *Lodgings*

ACRES and DAVID—ACRES as just dressed

Acres. Indeed, David—do you think I become it so ?*David.* You are quite another creature, believe me, master, by the mass ! an' we've any luck we shall see the Devon monkery in all the print-shops in Bath !*Acres.* Dress *does* make a difference, David.*David.* 'Tis all in all, I think—difference ! why, an' you were to go now to Clod Hall, I am certain the old lady wouldn't know you : Master Butler wouldn't believe his own eyes, and Mrs. Pickle would cry, " Lard presarve me ! ", our dairy-maid would come giggling to the door, and I warrant Dolly Tester, your honour's favourite, would blush like my waistcoat—Oons ! I'll hold a gallon, there an't a dog in the house but would bark, and I question whether Phillis would wag a hair of her tail ! 14*Acres.* Ay, David, there's nothing like polishing.*David.* So I says of your honour's boots ; but the boy never heeds me !*Acres.* But, David, has Mr. De-la-grace been here ? I must rub up my balancing, and chasing, and boring.*David.* I'll call again, sir.

20

Acres. Do—and see if there are any letters for me at the post-office.*David.* I will.—By the mass, I can't help looking at your head !—if I hadn't been by at the cooking, I wish I may die if I should have known the dish again myself.[*Exit.*

[ACRES comes forward, practising a dancing step.

Acres. Sink, slide—coupée—Confound the first inventors of cotillion ! say I—they are as bad as algebra to



F. 1500.
150

Acres. Dress *does* make a difference, David.

us country gentlemen—I can walk a minuet easy enough when I am forced!—and I have been accounted a good stick in a country-dance.—Odds jigs and tabors! I never valued your cross-over to couple—figure in—right and left—and I'd foot it with e'er a captain in the county!—but these outlandish heathen allemandes and cotillions are quite beyond me!—I shall never prosper at 'em, that's sure—mine are true-born English legs—they don't understand their curst French lingo!—their *pas* this, and *pas* that, and *pas* t'other!—damn me! my feet don't like to be called paws! no, 'tis certain I have most Anti-Gallican toes!

Enter SERVANT

Serv. Here is Sir Lucius O'Trigger to wait on you, sir.
Acres. Show him in.

Enter Sir LUCIUS

Sir Luc. Mr. Acres, I am delighted to embrace you.
Acres. My dear Sir Lucius, I kiss your hands.
Sir Luc. Pray, my friend, what has brought you so suddenly to Bath?

Acres. Faith! I have followed Cupid's Jack-a-lantern, and find myself in a quagmire at last.—In short, I have been very ill-used, Sir Lucius.—I don't choose to mention names, but look on me as on a very ill-used gentleman.

Sir Luc. Pray, what is the case?—I ask no names. 50
Acres. Mark me, Sir Lucius, I fall as deep as need be in love with a young lady—her friends take my part—I follow her to Bath—send word of my arrival; and receive answer, that the lady is to be otherwise disposed of.—This, Sir Lucius, I call being ill-used.

Sir Luc. Very ill, upon my conscience.—Pray, can you divine the cause of it ?

Acres. Why, there's the matter : she has another lover, one Beverley, who, I am told, is now in Bath.—Odds slanders and lies ! he must be at the bottom of it. 60

Sir Luc. A rival in the case, is there ?—and you think he has supplanted you unfairly ?

Acres. Unfairly ! to be sure he has.—He never could have done it fairly.

Sir Luc. Then sure you know what is to be done !

Acres. Not I, upon my soul !

Sir Luc. We wear no swords here, but you understand me.

Acres. What ! fight him !

Sir Luc. Ay, to be sure : what can I mean else ? 70

Acres. But he has given me no provocation.

Sir Luc. Now, I think he has given you the greatest provocation in the world.—Can a man commit a more heinous offence against another than to fall in love with the same woman ? Oh, by my soul ! it is the most unpardonable breach of friendship.

Acres. Breach of friendship ! Ay, ay ; but I have no acquaintance with this man. I never saw him in my life.

Sir Luc. That's no argument at all—he has the less right then to take such a liberty. 80

Acres. Gad, that's true—I grow full of anger, Sir Lucius !—I fire apace ! Odds hilts and blades ! I find a man may have a deal of valour in him, and not know it ! But couldn't I contrive to have a little right of my side ?

Sir Luc. What the devil signifies *right*, when your honour is concerned ? Do you think Achilles, or my little

Alexander the Great, ever inquired where the right lay ?
No, by my soul, they drew their broad-swords, and left
the lazy sons of peace to settle the justice of it.

Acres. Your words are a grenadier's march to my heart ! I believe courage must be catching !—I certainly do feel a kind of valour rising as it were—a kind of courage, as I may say—Odds flints, pans, and triggers ! I'll challenge him directly. 95

Sir Luc. Ah, my little friend ! if I had *Blunderbuss Hall* here, I could show you a range of ancestry, in the O'Trigger line, that would furnish the new room : every one of whom had killed his man !—For though the mansion-house and dirty acres have slipt through my fingers, I thank heaven our honour and the family-pictures are as fresh as ever. 102

Acres. Oh, Sir Lucius ! I have had ancestors too !—every man of 'em colonel or captain in the militia !—Odds balls and barrels ! say no more—I'm braced for it.—The thunder of your words has soured the milk of human kindness in my breast !—Zounds ! as the man in the play says, “ I could do such deeds—”

Sir Luc. Come, come, there must be no passion at all in the case—these things should always be done civilly.

Acres. I must be in a passion, Sir Lucius—I must be in a rage.—Dear Sir Lucius, let me be in a rage, if you love me.—Come, here's pen and paper.—(*Sits down to write.*)—I would the ink were red !—Indite, I say indite !—How shall I begin ? Odds bullets and blades ! I'll write a good bold hand, however. 116

Sir Luc. Pray compose yourself.

Acres. Come—now, shall I begin with an oath. Do, Sir Lucius, let me begin with a damme.

Sir Luc. Pho ! pho ! do the thing decently, and like a Christian. Begin now—“ *Sir*, ”— 121

Acres. That’s too civil by half.

Sir Luc. “ *To prevent the confusion that might arise* ”,

Acres. Well—

Sir Luc. “ *From our both addressing the same lady* ”—

Acres. Ay — there’s the reason — “ same lady ”—. Well—

Sir Luc. “ *I shall expect the honour of your company* ”,

Acres. Zounds ! I’m not asking him to dinner.

Sir Luc. Pray be easy.

Acres. Well then, “ honour of your company ”—

Sir Luc. “ *To settle our pretensions* ”— 132

Acres. Well.

Sir Luc. Let me see, ay, King’s Mead-fields will do—“ *in King’s Mead-fields.* ”

Acres. So that’s done.— Well, I’ll fold it up presently my own crest—a hand and dagger shall be the seal.

Sir Luc. You see now this little explanation will put a stop at once to all confusion or misunderstanding that might arise between you.

Acres. Ay, we fight to prevent any misunderstanding.

Sir Luc. Now, I’ll leave you to fix your own time.— Take my advice, and you’ll decide it this evening if you can ; then let the worst come of it, ’twill be off your mind to-morrow.

Acres. Very true.

Sir Luc. So I shall see nothing more of you, unless it be by letter, till the evening.— I would do myself the honour to carry your message ; but, to tell you a secret,

I believe I shall have just such another affair on my own hands. There is a gay captain here, who put a jest on me lately, at the expense of my country, and I only want to fall in with the gentleman, to call him out. 153

Acres. By my valour, I should like to see you fight first! Odds life! I should like to see you kill him, if it was only to get a little lesson.

Sir Luc. I shall be very proud of instructing you.— Well, for the present—but remember now, when you meet your antagonist, do everything in a mild and agreeable manner.—Let your courage be as keen, but at the same time as polished, as your sword. [*Exeunt severally.*]

ACT IV

SCENE I.—ACRES's *Lodgings*

ACRES and DAVID

David. Then, by the mass, sir ! I would do no such thing—ne'er a Sir Lucius O'Trigger in the kingdom should make me fight, when I wa'n't so minded. Oons ! what will the old lady say, when she hears o't ?

Acres. Ah ! David, if you had heard Sir Lucius !—Odds sparks and flames ! he would have roused your valour.

David. Not he, indeed. I hates such bloodthirsty cormorants. Look'ee, master, if you'd wanted a bout at boxing, quarter-staff, or short-staff, I should never be the man to bid you cry off : but for your curst sharps and snaps, I never knew any good come of 'em. 12

Acres. But my honour, David, my honour ! I must be very careful of my honour.

David. Ay, by the mass ! and I would be very careful of it ; and I think in return my *honour* couldn't do less than to be very careful of *me*.

Acres. Odds blades ! David, no gentleman will ever risk the loss of his honour !

David. I say then, it would be but civil in *honour* never to risk the loss of a *gentleman*.—Look'ee, master, this *honour* seems to me to be a marvellous false friend : ay,

truly, a very courtier-like servant.—Put the case, I was a gentleman (which, thank God, no one can say of me); well—my honour makes me quarrel with another gentleman of my acquaintance.—So—we fight. (Pleasant enough that.) Boh!—I kill him—(the more's my luck). Now, pray who gets the profit of it?—Why, my honour. But put the case that he kills me!—by the mass! I go to the worms, and my honour whips over to my enemy.

Acres. No, David—in that case!—Odds crowns and laurels! your honour follows you to the grave. 32

David. Now, that's just the place where I could make a shift to do without it.

Acres. Zounds! David, you are a coward!—It doesn't become my valour to listen to you.—What, shall I disgrace my ancestors?—Think of that, David—think what it would be to disgrace my ancestors!

David. Under favour, the surest way of not disgracing them, is to keep as long as you can out of their company. Look'ee now, master, to go to them in such haste—with an ounce of lead in your brains—I should think might as well be let alone. Our ancestors are very good kind of folks; but they are the last people I should choose to have a visiting acquaintance with. 45

Acres. But, David, now, you don't think there is such very, very, *very* great danger, hey?—Odds life! people often fight without any mischief done!

David. By the mass, I think 'tis ten to one against you!—Oons! here to meet some lion-headed fellow, I warrant, with his damn'd double-barrelled swords, and cut-and-thrust pistols!—Lord bless us! it makes me tremble to think o't!—Those be such desperate bloody-minded weapons! Well, I never could abide 'em—from

a child I never could fancy 'em!—I suppose there an't been so merciless a beast in the world as your loaded pistol!

Acres. Zounds! I *won't* be afraid—Odds fire and fury! you shan't make me afraid.—Here is the challenge, and I have sent for my dear friend Jack Absolute to carry it for me. 61

David. Ay, i' the name of mischief, let *him* be the messenger.—For my part, I wouldn't lend a hand to it for the best horse in your stable. By the mass! it don't look like another letter!—It is, as I may say, a designing and malicious-looking letter;—and I warrant smells of gunpowder like a soldier's pouch!—Oons! I wouldn't swear it mayn't go off!

Acres. Out, you poltroon!—you han't the valour of a grasshopper. 70

David. Well, I say no more—'twill be sad news, to be sure, at Clod Hall!—but I ha' done.—How Phillis will howl when she hears about it!—Ay, poor bitch, she little thinks what shooting her master's going after!—And I warrant old Crop, who has carried your honour, field and road, these ten years, will curse the hour he was born.

[Whispering.]

Acres. It won't do, David—I am determined to fight—so get along, you coward, while I'm in the mind.

Enter SERVANT

Serv. Captain Absolute, sir.

Acres. Oh, show him up. [Exit SERVANT.]

David. Well, heaven send we be all alive this time to-morrow. 82

Acres. What's that!—Don't provoke me, David!

David. Good-bye, master. [Whispering.]

Acres. Get along, you cowardly, dastardly, croaking raven. [Exit DAVID.]

Enter ABSOLUTE

Abs. What's the matter, Bob?

Acres. A vile, sheep-hearted blockhead!—If I hadn't the valour of St. George and the dragon to boot—

Abs. But what did you want with me, Bob? 90

Acres. Oh!—There. [Gives him the challenge.]

Abs. “To Ensign Beverley.” So—what's going on now! [Aside.]

Well, what's this?

Acres. A challenge!

Abs. Indeed!—Why, you won't fight him, will you, Bob?

Acres. Egad, but I will, Jack.—Sir Lucius has wrought me to it. He has left me full of rage—and I'll fight this evening, that so much good passion mayn't be wasted.

Abs. But what have I to do with this? 101

Acres. Why, as I think you know something of this fellow, I want you to find him out for me, and give him this mortal defiance.

Abs. Well, give it to me, and trust me he gets it.

Acres. Thank you, my dear friend, my dear Jack; but it is giving you a great deal of trouble.

Abs. Not in the least—I beg you won't mention it.—No trouble in the world, I assure you.

Acres. You are very kind.—What it is to have a friend!—You couldn't be my second—could you, Jack?

Abs. Why, no, Bob—not in *this* affair—it would not be quite so proper. 113

Acres. Well, then, I must get my friend Sir Lucius. I shall have your good wishes, however, Jack ?

Abs. Whenever he meets you, believe me.

Enter SERVANT

Serv. Sir Anthony Absolute is below, inquiring for the captain.

Abs. I'll come instantly.—Well, my little hero, success attend you. [Going.]

Acres. Stay—stay, Jack.—If Beverley should ask you what kind of a man your friend Acres is, do tell him I am a devil of a fellow—will you, Jack ? 123

Abs. To be sure I shall.—I'll say you are a determined dog—hey, Bob ?

Acres. Ay, do, do—and if that frightens him, egad, perhaps he mayn't come. So tell him I generally kill a man a week ; will you, Jack ?

Abs. I will, I will ; I'll say you are called in the country “*Fighting Bob.*” 130

Acres. Right—right—’tis all to prevent mischief ; for I don't want to take his life if I clear my honour.

Abs. No !—that's very kind of you.

Acres. Why, you don't wish me to kill him—do you, Jack ?

Abs. No, upon my soul, I do not.—But a devil of a fellow, hey ? [Going.]

Acres. True, true—but stay—stay, Jack—you may add, that you never saw me in such a rage before—a most devouring rage ! 140

Abs. I will, I will.

Acres. Remember, Jack—a determined dog !

Abs. Ay, ay, “*Fighting Bob !*” [Exeunt severally.]

SCENE II.—Mrs. MALAPROP'S *Lodgings*

Mrs. MALAPROP and LYDIA

Mrs. Mal. Why, thou perverse one!—tell me what you can object to him?—Isn't he a handsome man?—tell me that.—A genteel man? a pretty figure of a man?

Lydia. She little thinks whom she is praising! (*Aside.*)—So is Beverley, ma'am.

Mrs. Mal. No caparisons, miss, if you please.—Caparisons don't become a young woman.—No! Captain Absolute is indeed a fine gentleman!

Lydia. Ay, the Captain Absolute *you* have seen. 9
[*Aside.*]

Mrs. Mal. Then he's *so* well bred;—so full of alacrity and adulation!—and has *so much* to say for himself:—in such good language too!—His physiognomy so grammatical!—Then his presence is so noble!—I protest when I saw him, I thought of what Hamlet says in the play:—“Hesperian curls—the front of *Job* himself!—an eye, like *March*, to threaten at command!—a station, like Harry Mercury, new—” Something about kissing—on a hill—however, the similitude struck me directly.

Lydia. How enraged she'll be presently when she discovers her mistake! 22
[*Aside.*]

Enter SERVANT

Serv. Sir Anthony and Captain Absolute are below, ma'am. 22

Mrs. Mal. Show them up here. [Exit SERVANT. Now, Lydia, I insist on your behaving as becomes a young woman.—Show your good breeding, at least, though you have forgot your duty.

Lydia. Madam, I have told you my resolution!—I shall not only give him no encouragement, but I won't even speak to, or look at him.

[*Flings herself into a chair, with her face from the door.*

Enter Sir ANTHONY and ABSOLUTE

Sir Anth. Here we are, Mrs. Malaprop; come to mitigate the frowns of unrelenting beauty,—and difficulty enough I had to bring this fellow.—I don't know what's the matter; but if I had not held him by force, he'd have given me the slip. 34

Mrs. Mal. You have infinite trouble, Sir Anthony, in the affair.—I am ashamed for the cause! Lydia, Lydia, rise, I beseech you!—pay your respects! [*Aside to her.*

Sir Anth. I hope, madam, that Miss Languish has reflected on the worth of this gentleman, and the regard due to her aunt's choice, and *my* alliance.—Now, Jack, speak to her. [*Aside to him.*

Abs. What the devil shall I do! (*Aside.*) You see, sir, she won't even look at me, whilst you are here.—I knew she wouldn't!—I told you so—Let me entreat you, sir, to leave us together! 45

[*ABSOLUTE seems to expostulate with his father.*

Lydia. (*Aside.*) I wonder I ha'n't heard my aunt exclaim yet! sure she can't have looked at him!—perhaps their regimentals are alike, and she is something blind.

Sir Anth. I say, sir, I won't stir a foot yet. 50

Mrs. Mal. I am sorry to say, Sir Anthony, that my affluence over my niece is very small.—Turn round, Lydia; I blush for you! [*Aside to her.*

Sir Anth. May I not flatter myself, that Miss Languish will assign what cause of dislike she can have to my son !—Why don't you begin, Jack ?—Speak, you puppy—speak ! [Aside to him.]

Mrs. Mal. It is impossible, Sir Anthony, she can have any.—She will not say she has.—Answer, hussy ! why don't you answer ? [Aside to her.]

Sir Anth. Then, madam, I trust that a childish and hasty predilection will be no bar to Jack's happiness.—Zounds ! sirrah ! why don't you speak ! [Aside to him.]

Lydia. (Aside.) I think my lover seems as little inclined to conversation as myself.—How strangely blind my aunt must be ! 66

Abs. Hem ! hem ! madam—hem ! (ABSOLUTE attempts to speak, then returns to Sir ANTHONY)—Faith ! sir, I am so confounded !—and—so—so—confused !—I told you I should be so, sir,—I knew it.—The—the—tremor of my passion entirely takes away my presence of mind.

Sir Anth. But it don't take away your voice, fool, does it ?—Go up, and speak to her directly ! 73

[ABSOLUTE makes signs to Mrs. MALAPROP to leave them together.]

Mrs. Mal. Sir Anthony, shall we leave them together ?—Ah ! you stubborn little vixen ! [Aside to her.]

Sir Anth. Not yet, ma'am, not yet !—what the devil are you at ? unlock your jaws, sirrah, or— [Aside to him.]

[ABSOLUTE draws near LYDIA.]

Abs. Now heaven send she may be too sullen to look round !—I must disguise my voice. [Aside.]

[Speaks in a low hoarse tone.]—Will not Miss Languish lend an ear to the mild accents of true love ?—Will not— 81

Sir Anth. What the devil ails the fellow?—Why don't you speak out?—not stand croaking like a frog in a quinsy!

Abs. The—the—excess of my awe, and my—my—my modesty, quite choke me!

Sir Anth. Ah! your *modesty* again! I'll tell you what, Jack; if you don't speak out directly, and glibly too, I shall be in such a rage!—Mrs. Malaprop, I wish the lady would favour us with something more than a side-front.

[*Mrs. MALAPROP* seems to chide *LYDIA*.]

Abs. So all will out, I see! 91

[*Goes up to LYDIA, speaks softly.*
Be not surprised, my Lydia, suppress all surprise at present.

Lydia. (*Aside.*) Heavens! 'tis Beverley's voice!—Sure he can't have imposed on Sir Anthony too!

[*Looks round by degrees, then starts up.*
Is this possible!—my Beverley!—how can this be?—my Beverley?

Abs. Ah! 'tis all over. [*Aside.*]

Sir Anth. Beverley!—the devil—Beverley!—What can the girl mean?—This is my son, Jack Absolute. 100

Mrs. Mal. For shame, hussy! for shame!—your head runs so on that fellow, that you have him always in your eyes!—beg Captain Absolute's pardon directly.

Lydia. I see no Captain Absolute, but my loved Beverley!

Sir Anth. Zounds! the girl's mad!—her brain's turned by reading!

Mrs. Mal. O' my conscience, I believe so!—What do you mean by Beverley, hussy?—You saw Captain

Absolute before to-day ; there he is—your husband that shall be. 112

Lydia. With all my soul, ma'am—when I refuse my Beverley—

Sir Anth. Oh ! she's as mad as Bedlam !—or has this fellow been playing us a rogue's trick ?—Come here, sirrah, who the devil are you ?

Abs. Faith, sir, I am not quite clear myself ; but I'll endeavour to recollect.

Sir Anth. Are you my son or not ?—answer for your mother, you dog, if you won't for me. 121

Mrs. Mal. Ay, sir, who are you ? Oh, mercy ! I begin to suspect !—

Abs. Ye powers of Impudence, befriend me ! (Aside.) Sir Anthony, most assuredly I am your wife's son ; and that I sincerely believe myself to be *yours* also, I hope my duty has always shown.—Mrs. Malaprop, I am your most respectful admirer—and shall be proud to add affectionate nephew.—I need not tell my Lydia, that she sees her faithful Beverley, who, knowing the singular generosity of her temper, assumed that name, and a station, which has proved a test of the most disinterested love, which he now hopes to enjoy in a more elevated character. 133

Lydia. So !—there will be no elopement after all !

[*Sullenly.*

Sir Anth. Upon my soul, Jack, thou art a very impudent fellow ! to do you justice, I think I never saw a piece of more consummate assurance !

Abs. Oh, you flatter me, sir,—you compliment—'tis my *modesty*, you know, sir—my *modesty* that has stood in my way. 140

Sir Anth. Well, I am glad you are not the dull,

insensible varlet you pretended to be, however!—I'm glad you have made a fool of your father, you dog—I am—So this was your *penitence*, your *duty*, and *obedience*!—I thought it was damn'd sudden!—You *never heard their names before*, not you!—*What*, The *LANGUISHES* of Worcestershire, hey?—*if you could please me in the affair*, 'twas all you desired!—Ah! you dissembling villain!—What! (pointing to LYDIA) *she squints, don't she?*—*a little red-haired girl!*—hey?—Why, you hypocritical young rascal!—I wonder you a'n't ashamed to hold up your head! 152

Abs. 'Tis with difficulty, sir—I *am* confused—very much confused, as you must perceive.

Mrs. Mal. Oh, Lud! Sir Anthony!—a new light breaks in upon me!—hey!—how! what! captain, did *you* write the letters then?—What—am I to thank *you* for the elegant compilation of "*an old weather-beaten she-dragon*"—hey?—Oh, mercy!—was it *you* that reflected on my parts of speech? 160

Abs. Dear sir! my modesty will be overpowered at last, if you don't assist me.—I shall certainly not be able to stand it!

Sir Anth. Come, come, Mrs. Malaprop, we must forget and forgive;—odds life! matters have taken so clever a turn all of a sudden, that I could find in my heart to be so good-humoured! and so gallant! hey! Mrs. Malaprop!

Mrs. Mal. Well, Sir Anthony, since *you* desire it, we will not anticipate the past;—so mind, young people—our retrospection will be all to the future. 170

Sir Anth. Come, we must leave them together; Mrs. Malaprop, they long to fly into each other's arms, I warrant!—Jack—isn't the cheek as I said, hey?—and

the eye, you rogue!—and the lip—he? Come, Mrs. Malaprop, we'll not disturb their tenderness—theirs is the time of life for happiness!—“Youth's the season made for joys”—(sings)—he?—Odds life! I'm in such spirits,—I don't know what I could not do!—Permit me, ma'am—(gives his hand to Mrs. MALAPROP)—(sings) Tol-de-rol—'gad, I should like to have a little fooling myself—Tol-de-rol! de-rol! 181

[Exit singing and handing Mrs. MALAPROP.

[LYDIA sits sullenly in her chair.

Abs. So much thought bodes me no good. (Aside.)—So grave, Lydia!

Lydia. Sir!

Abs. So!—egad! I thought as much!—that damn'd monosyllable has froze me! (Aside.)—What, Lydia, now that we are as happy in our friends' consent, as in our mutual vows—

Lydia. Friends' consent indeed! [Peevishly.

Abs. Come, come, we must lay aside some of our romance—a little *wealth* and *comfort* may be endured after all. And for your fortune, the lawyers shall make such settlements as— 193

Lydia. Lawyers! I hate lawyers!

Abs. Nay, then, we will not wait for their lingering forms, but instantly procure the licence, and—

Lydia. The licence!—I hate licence!

Abs. Oh, my love! be not so unkind!—thus let me entreat— [Kneeling.

Lydia. Pshaw!—what signifies kneeling when you know I must have you? 201

Abs. (Rising.) Nay, madam, there shall be no constraint upon your inclinations, I promise you.—If I have

lost your heart—I resign the rest.—Gad, I must try what a little *spirit* will do. [Aside.

Lydia. (Rising.) Then, sir, let me tell you, the interest you had there was acquired by a mean, unmanly imposition, and deserves the punishment of fraud.—What, you have been treating *me* like a child!—humouring my romance! and laughing, I suppose, at your success!

Abs. You wrong me, Lydia, you wrong me—only hear— 213

Lydia. So, while *I* fondly imagined we were deceiving my relations, and flattered myself that I should outwit and incense them all—behold my hopes are to be crushed at once, by my aunt's consent and approbation—and *I* am myself the only dupe at last! (Walking about in a heat.)—But here, sir, here is the picture—Beverley's picture! (taking a miniature from her bosom) which I have worn, night and day, in spite of threats and entreaties!—There, sir (flings it to him), and be assured I throw the original from my heart as easily. 223

Abs. Nay, nay, ma'am, we will not differ as to that—Here (taking out a picture), here is Miss Lydia Languish.—What a difference!—ay, there is the heavenly assenting smile that first gave soul and spirit to my hopes!—those are the lips which sealed a vow, as yet scarce dry in Cupid's calendar!—and there the half-resentful blush, that would have checked the ardour of my thanks—Well, all that's past!—all over indeed!—There, madam—in beauty, that copy is not equal to you, but in my mind its merit over the original, in being still the same, is such—that—I cannot find in my heart to part with it. 234

[Puts it up again.

Lydia. (Softening.) 'Tis your own doing, sir—I, I, I suppose you are perfectly satisfied.

Abs. Oh, most certainly—sure, now, this is much better than being in love!—ha! ha! ha!—there's some spirit in *this*!—What signifies breaking some scores of solemn promises:—all that's of no consequence, you know.—To be sure people will say, that miss didn't know her own mind—but never mind that!—or, perhaps, they may be ill-natured enough to hint, that the gentleman grew tired of the lady and forsook her—but don't let that fret you.

Lydia. There's no bearing his insolence.

246

[*Bursts into tears.*

Enter Mrs. MALAPROP and Sir ANTHONY

Mrs. Mal. (Entering.) Come, we must interrupt your billing and cooing awhile.

Lydia. This is worse than your treachery and deceit, you base ingrate.

[*Sobbing.*

Sir Anth. What the devil's the matter now!—Zounds! Mrs. Malaprop, this is the *oddest billing and cooing* I ever heard!—but what the deuce is the meaning of it?—I am quite astonished!

254

Abs. Ask the lady, sir.

Mrs. Mal. Oh, mercy!—I'm quite analysed, for my part!—why, Lydia, what is the reason of this?

Lydia. Ask the gentleman, ma'am.

Sir Anth. Zounds! I shall be in a frenzy!—why, Jack, you are not come out to be any one else, are you?

Mrs. Mal. Ay, sir, there's no more trick, is there?—you are not like Cerberus, *three* gentlemen at once, are you?

Abs. You'll not let me speak—I say the lady can account for this much better than I can. 265

Lydia. Ma'am, you once commanded me never to think of Beverley again—there is the man—I now obey you:—for, from this moment, I renounce him for ever.

[*Exit LYDIA.*]

Mrs. Mal. Oh, mercy! and miracles! what a turn here is—why sure, captain, you haven't behaved disrespectfully to my niece.

Sir Anth. Ha! ha! ha!—ha! ha! ha!—now I see it—Ha! ha! ha!—now I see it—you have been too lively, Jack. 274

Abs. Nay, sir, upon my word—

Sir Anth. Come, no lying, Jack—I'm sure 'twas so.

Mrs. Mal. Oh, Lud! Sir Anthony!—Oh, fie, captain!

Abs. Upon my soul, ma'am—

Sir Anth. Come, no excuses, Jack;—why, your father, you rogue, was so before you:—the blood of the Absolutes was always impatient.—Ha! ha! ha! poor little Lydia!—why, you've frightened her, you dog, you have. 282

Abs. By all that's good, sir—

Sir Anth. Zounds! say no more, I tell you—Mrs. Malaprop shall make your peace.—You must make his peace, Mrs. Malaprop:—you must tell her 'tis Jack's way—tell her 'tis all our ways—it runs in the blood of our family!—Come away, Jack—Ha! ha! ha! Mrs. Malaprop—a young villain! [Pushes him out.

Mrs. Mal. Oh! Sir Anthony!—Oh, fie, captain!

[*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE III.—*The North Parade**Enter Sir LUCIUS O'TRIGGER*

Sir Luc. I wonder where this Captain Absolute hides himself.—Upon my conscience ! these officers are always in one's way in love affairs :—I remember I might have married Lady Dorothy Carmine, if it had not been for a little rogue of a major, who ran away with her before she could get a sight of me !—And I wonder too what it is the ladies can see in them to be so fond of them—unless it be a touch of the old serpent in 'em, that makes the little creatures be caught, like vipers, with a bit of red cloth.—Hah ! isn't this the captain coming ?—faith it is !—There is a probability of succeeding about that fellow, that is mighty provoking ! Who the devil is he talking to ? 12

[*Steps aside.*]*Enter Captain ABSOLUTE*

Abs. To what fine purpose I have been plotting ! a noble reward for all my schemes, upon my soul !—a little gipsy !—I did not think her romance could have made her so damn'd absurd either.—'Sdeath, I never was in a worse humour in my life !—I could cut my own throat, or any other person's, with the greatest pleasure in the world !

Sir Luc. Oh, faith ! I'm in the luck of it.—I never could have found him in a sweeter temper for my purpose —to be sure I'm just come in the nick ! Now to enter into conversation with him, and so quarrel genteelly. 23

[*Sir LUCIUS goes up to ABSOLUTE.*]

—With regard to that matter, captain, I must beg leave to differ in opinion with you.

Abs. Upon my word, then, you must be a very subtle disputant:—because, sir, I happened just then to be giving no opinion at all.

Sir Luc. That's no reason—For give me leave to tell you, a man may *think* an untruth as well as speak one. 30

Abs. Very true, sir; but if a man never utters his thoughts, I should think they might stand a chance of escaping controversy.

Sir Luc. Then, sir, you differ in opinion with me, which amounts to the same thing.

Abs. Hark'ee, Sir Lucius,—if I had not before known you to be a gentleman, upon my soul, I should not have discovered it at this interview:—for what you can drive at, unless you mean to quarrel with me, I cannot conceive!

Sir Luc. I humbly thank you, sir, for the quickness of your apprehension—(*Bowing*)—you have named the very thing I would be at. 43

Abs. Very well, sir—I shall certainly not balk your inclinations:—but I should be glad you would please to explain your motives.

Sir Luc. Pray, sir, be easy—the quarrel is a very pretty quarrel as it stands—we should only spoil it, by trying to explain it.—However, your memory is very short—or you could not have forgot an affront you passed on me within this week.—So, no more, but name your time and place. 52

Abs. Well, sir, since you are so bent on it, the sooner the better:—let it be this evening—here by the Spring Gardens.—We shall scarcely be interrupted.

Sir Luc. Faith! that same interruption in affairs of this nature shows very great ill-breeding.—I don't know

what's the reason, but in England, if a thing of this kind gets wind, people make such a pother, that a gentleman can never fight in peace and quietness.—However, if it's the same to you, captain, I should take it as a particular kindness, if you'd let us meet in King's Mead-fields, as a little business will call me there about six o'clock, and I may despatch both matters at once.

Abs. 'Tis the same to me exactly.—A little after six, then, we will discuss this matter more seriously. 66

Sir Luc. If you please, sir ; there will be very pretty small-sword light, though it won't do for a long shot.—So that matter's settled ! and my mind's at ease.

[*Exit Sir Lucius.*

Enter FAULKLAND, meeting ABSOLUTE

Abs. Well met.—I was going to look for you.—Oh, Faulkland ! all the demons of spite and disappointment have conspired against me ! I'm so vexed, that if I had not the prospect of a resource in being knocked o' the head by and by, I should scarce have spirits to tell you the cause. 75

Faulk. What can you mean ?—Has Lydia changed her mind ?—I should have thought her duty and inclination would now have pointed to the same object.

Abs. Ay, just as the eyes do of a person who squints :—when her love-eye was fixed on me—t'other—her eye of duty, was finely obliqued :—but when duty bid her point that the same way—off t'other turned on a swivel, and secured its retreat with a frown ! 83

Faulk. But what's the resource you—

Abs. Oh, to wind up the whole, a good-natured Irishman here has (*mimicking Sir Lucius*) begged leave

to have the pleasure of cutting my throat—and I mean to indulge him—that's all.

Faulk. Prithee, be serious.

Abs. 'Tis fact, upon my soul.—Sir Lucius O'Trigger—you know him by sight—for some affront, which I am sure I never intended, has obliged me to meet him this evening at six o'clock:—'tis on that account I wished to see you—you must go with me. 94

Faulk. Nay, there must be some mistake, sure.—Sir Lucius shall explain himself—and I daresay matters may be accommodated:—but this evening, did you say?—I wish it had been any other time.

Abs. Why?—there will be light enough:—there will (as Sir Lucius says) “be very pretty small-sword light, though it will not do for a long shot.”—Confound his long shots! 102

Faulk. But I am myself a good deal ruffled, by a difference I have had with Julia—my vile tormenting temper has made me treat her so cruelly, that I shall not be myself till we are reconciled.

Abs. By heavens! Faulkland, you don't deserve her.

Enter SERVANT, gives FAULKLAND a letter

Faulk. Oh, Jack! this is from Julia—I dread to open it—I fear it may be to take a last leave—perhaps to bid me return her letters—and restore—Oh! how I suffer for my folly! 111

Abs. Here—let me see.

[*Takes the letter and opens it.*

Ay, a final sentence, indeed!—'tis all over with you, faith!

Faulk. Nay, Jack—don't keep me in suspense.

Abs. Hear then.—“*As I am convinced that my dear Faulkland's own reflections have already upbraided him for his last unkindness to me, I will not add a word on the subject.—I wish to speak with you as soon as possible.—Yours ever and truly, JULIA.*”——There's stubbornness and resentment for you ! [Gives him the letter.] Why, man, you don't seem one whit the happier at this.

Faulk. Oh, yes, I am—but—but—

123

Abs. Confound your *buts*!—You never hear anything that would make another man bless himself, but you immediately damn it with a *but*.

Faulk. Now, Jack, as you are my friend, own honestly—don't you think there is something forward—something indelicate in this haste to forgive?—Women should never sue for reconciliation:—that should always come from us.—They should retain their coldness till *woo'd* to kindness—and their *pardon*, like their *love*, should “not unsought be won.”

133

Abs. I have not patience to listen to you:—thou'rt incorrigible!—so say no more on the subject.—I must go to settle a few matters—let me see you before six—remember—at my lodgings.—A poor industrious devil like me, who have toiled, and drudged, and plotted to gain my ends, and am at last disappointed by other people's folly—may in pity be allowed to swear and grumble a little;—but a captious sceptic in love, a slave to fretfulness and whim—who has no difficulties but of his own creating—is a subject more fit for ridicule than compassion.

[Exit ABSOLUTE.

Faulk. I feel his reproaches:—yet I would not change this too exquisite nicety, for the gross content with which *he* tramples on the thorns of love.—His engaging me in

this duel has started an idea in my head, which I will instantly pursue.—I'll use it as the touchstone of Julia's sincerity and disinterestedness—if her love prove pure and sterling ore, my name will rest on it with honour!—and once I've stamped it there, I lay aside my doubts for ever:—but if the dross of selfishness, the alloy of pride predominate—'twill be best to leave her as a toy for some less cautious fool to sigh for. [Exit FAULKLAND.

ACT V

SCENE I.—JULIA'S Dressing-room

JULIA sola

— How this message has alarmed me ! what dreadful accident can he mean ? why such charge to be alone ?
— Oh, Faulkland !—how many unhappy moments—
how many tears have you cost me !

Enter FAULKLAND

Julia. What means this ?—why this caution, Faulkland ?

Faulk. Alas ! Julia, I am come to take a long farewell.

Julia. Heavens ! what do you mean ?

Faulk. You see before you a wretch, whose life is forfeited.—Nay, start not !—the infirmity of my temper has drawn all this misery on me.—I left you fretful and passionate—an untoward accident drew me into a quarrel—the event is, that I must fly this kingdom instantly. Oh, Julia, had I been so fortunate as to have called you mine entirely, before this mischance had fallen on me, I should not so deeply dread my banishment !

16

Julia. My soul is oppressed with sorrow at the nature of your misfortune : had these adverse circumstances arisen from a less fatal cause, I should have felt strong comfort in the thought that I could now chase from your

bosom every doubt of the warm sincerity of my love.—
My heart has long known no other guardian—I now
intrust my person to your honour—we will fly together.—
When safe from pursuit, my father's will may be fulfilled
—and I receive a legal claim to be the partner of your
sorrows, and tenderest comforter. Then on the bosom of
your wedded Julia, you may lull your keen regret to
slumbering; while virtuous love, with a cherub's hand,
shall smooth the brow of upbraiding thought, and pluck
the thorn from compunction. 30

Faulk. Oh, Julia! I am bankrupt in gratitude! but
the time is so pressing, it calls on you for so hasty a
resolution.—Would you not wish some hours to weigh the
advantages you forgo, and what little compensation poor
Faulkland can make you beside his solitary love?

Julia. I ask not a moment.—No, Faulkland, I have
loved you for yourself: and if I now, more than ever,
prize the solemn engagement which so long has pledged
us to each other, it is because it leaves no room for hard
aspersions on my fame, and puts the seal of duty to an act
of love.—But let us not linger.—Perhaps this delay—

Faulk. 'Twill be better I should not venture out again
till dark.—Yet am I grieved to think what numberless
distresses will press heavy on your gentle disposition!

Julia. Perhaps your fortune may be forfeited by this
unhappy act.—I know not whether 'tis so—but sure that
alone can never make us unhappy.—The little I have will
be sufficient to support us; and exile never should be
splendid. 49

Faulk. Ay, but in such an abject state of life, my
wounded pride perhaps may increase the natural fretfulness
of my temper, till I become a rude, morose com-

panion, beyond your patience to endure. Perhaps the recollection of a deed my conscience cannot justify may haunt me in such gloomy and unsocial fits, that I shall hate the tenderness that would relieve me, break from your arms, and quarrel with your fondness !

Julia. If your thoughts should assume so unhappy a bent, you will the more want some mild and affectionate spirit to watch over and console you :—one who, by bearing *your* infirmities with gentleness and resignation, may teach you *so* to bear the evils of your fortune. 62

Faulk. Julia, I have proved you to the quick ! and with this useless device I throw away all my doubts. How shall I plead to be forgiven this last unworthy effect of my restless, unsatisfied disposition ?

Julia. Has no such disaster happened as you related ?

Faulk. I am ashamed to own that it was pretended ; yet in pity, Julia, do not kill me with resenting a fault which never can be repeated : but sealing, this once, my pardon, let me to-morrow, in the face of Heaven, receive my future guide and monitress, and expiate my past folly, by years of tender adoration. 73

Julia. Hold, Faulkland !—that you are free from a crime, which I before feared to name, Heaven knows how sincerely I rejoice !—These are tears of thankfulness for that ! But that your cruel doubts should have urged you to an imposition that has wrung my heart, gives me now a pang, more keen than I can express !

Faulk. By heavens ! Julia—

80

Julia. Yet hear me.—My father loved you, Faulkland ! and you preserved the life that tender parent gave me ; in his presence I pledged my hand—joyfully pledged it—where before I had given my heart. When, soon after,

I lost that parent, it seemed to me that Providence had, in Falkland, shown me whither to transfer, without a pause, my grateful duty, as well as my affection: hence I have been content to bear from you what pride and delicacy would have forbid me from another.—I will not upbraid you, by repeating how you have trifled with my sincerity.—

91

Faulk. I confess it all! yet hear—

Julia. After such a year of trial, I might have flattered myself that I should not have been insulted with a new probation of my sincerity, as cruel as unnecessary! I now see it is not in your nature to be content, or confident in love. With this conviction—I never will be yours. While I had hopes that my persevering attention, and unreproaching kindness, might in time reform your temper, I should have been happy to have gained a dearer influence over you; but I will not furnish you with a licensed power to keep alive an incorrigible fault, at the expense of one who never would contend with you. 103

Faulk. Nay, but, Julia, by my soul and honour, if after this—

Julia. But one word more.—As my faith has once been given to you, I never will barter it with another.—I shall pray for your happiness with the truest sincerity; and the dearest blessing I can ask of Heaven to send you will be to charm you from that unhappy temper, which alone has prevented the performance of our solemn engagement.—All I request of *you* is, that you will yourself reflect upon this infirmity, and when you number up the many true delights it has deprived you of—let it not be your *least* regret, that it lost you the love of one—who would have followed you in beggary through the world! [Exit.

Faulk. She's gone!—for ever!—There was an awful resolution in her manner, that riveted me to my place.—O fool!—dolt!—barbarian!—Curst as I am, with more imperfections than my fellow-wretches, kind Fortune sent a heaven-gifted cherub to my aid, and, like a ruffian, I have driven her from my side!—I must now haste to my appointment.—Well, my mind is tuned for such a scene.—I shall wish only to become a principal in it, and reverse the tale my cursed folly put me upon forging here.—O Love!—tormentor!—fiend!—whose influence, like the moon's, acting on men of dull souls, makes idiots of them, but meeting subtler spirits, betrays their course, and urges sensibility to madness! [Exit.

Enter MAID and LYDIA

Maid. My mistress, ma'am, I know, was here just now—perhaps she is only in the next room. [Exit MAID.

Lydia. Heigh-ho!—Though he has used me so, this fellow runs strangely in my head. I believe one lecture from my grave cousin will make me recall him. 134

Enter JULIA

Lydia. Oh, Julia, I am come to you with such an appetite for consolation.—Lud! child, what's the matter with you?—You have been crying!—I'll be hanged, if that Faulkland has not been tormenting you!

Julia. You mistake the cause of my uneasiness!—Something *has* flurried me a little.—Nothing that you can guess at.—I would not accuse Faulkland to a sister! [Aside.

Lydia. Ah! whatever vexations you may have, I can

assure you mine surpass them.—You know who Beverley proves to be ?

145

Julia. I will now own to you, Lydia, that Mr. Faulkland had before informed me of the whole affair. Had young Absolute been the person you took him for, I should not have accepted your confidence on the subject, without a serious endeavour to counteract your caprice.

Lydia. So, then, I see I have been deceived by every one!—but I don't care—I'll never have him.

152

Julia. Nay, Lydia—

Lydia. Why, is it not provoking ? when I thought we were coming to the prettiest distress imaginable, to find myself made a mere Smithfield bargain of at last.—There, had I projected one of the most sentimental elopements!—so becoming a disguise!—so amiable a ladder of ropes!—Conscious moon—four horses—Scotch parson—with such surprise to Mrs. Malaprop—and such paragraphs in the newspapers!—Oh, I shall die with disappointment !

162

Julia. I don't wonder at it !

Lydia. Now—sad reverse!—what have I to expect, but, after a deal of flimsy preparation with a bishop's licence, and my aunt's blessing, to go simpering up to the altar; or perhaps be cried three times in a country church, and have an unmannerly fat clerk ask the consent of every butcher in the parish to join John Absolute and Lydia Languish, spinster ! Oh, that I should live to hear myself called Spinster !

171

Julia. Melancholy, indeed !

Lydia. How mortifying, to remember the dear delicious shifts I used to be put to, to gain half a minute's conversation with this fellow !—How often have I stole

forth, in the coldest night in January, and found him in the garden, stuck like a dripping statue!—There would he kneel to me in the snow, and sneeze and cough so pathetically! he shivering with cold and I with apprehension! and while the freezing blast numbed our joints, how warmly would he press me to pity his flame, and glow with mutual ardour!—Ah, Julia, that was something like being in love.

183

Julia. If I were in spirits, Lydia, I should chide you only by laughing heartily at you; but it suits more the situation of my mind, at present, earnestly to entreat you not to let a man, who loves you with sincerity, suffer that unhappiness from your caprice, which I know too well caprice can inflict.

Lydia. Oh, Lud! what has brought my aunt here?

Enter Mrs. MALAPROP, FAG, and DAVID

Mrs. Mal. So! so! here's fine work!—here's fine suicide, paricide, and simulation going on in the fields! and Sir Anthony not to be found to prevent the anti-strophe!

194

Julia. For Heaven's sake, madam, what's the meaning of this?

Mrs. Mal. That gentleman can tell you—'twas he enveloped the affair to me.

Lydia. Do, sir, will you, inform us? [To FAG.

Fag. Ma'am, I should hold myself very deficient in every requisite that forms the man of breeding, if I delayed a moment to give all the information in my power to a lady so deeply interested in the affair as you are.

Lydia. But quick! quick, sir!

Fag. True, ma'am, as you say, one should be quick in



Mrs. Mal. So ! so ! here's fine work !—here's fine suicide, paracide, and simulation !

divulging matters of this nature ; for should we be tedious, perhaps while we are flourishing on the subject, two or three lives may be lost !

Lydia. Oh, patience!—Do, ma'am, for Heaven's sake! tell us what is the matter? 210

Mrs. Mal. Why! murder's the matter! slaughter's the matter! killing's the matter!—but he can tell you the perpendiculars.

Lydia. Then, prithee, sir, be brief.

Fag. Why then, ma'am, as to murder—I cannot take upon me to say—and as to slaughter, or manslaughter, that will be as the jury finds it.

Lydia. But who, sir,—who are engaged in this?

Fag. Faith, ma'am, one is a young gentleman whom I should be very sorry anything was to happen to—a very pretty-behaved gentleman!—We have lived much together, and always on terms. 222

Lydia. But who is this? who! who! who!

Fag. My master, ma'am—my master—I speak of my master.

Lydia. Heavens! What, Captain Absolute!

Mrs. Mal. Oh, to be sure, you are frightened now!

Julia. But who are with him, sir?

Fag. As to the rest, ma'am, this gentleman can inform you better than I. 230

Julia. Do speak, friend.

[To DAVID.

David. Look'ee, my lady—by the mass! there's mischief going on. Folks don't use to meet for amusement with fire-arms, firelocks, fire-engines, fire-screens, fire-office, and the devil knows what other crackers beside! —This, my lady, I say, has an angry favour.

Julia. But who is there beside Captain Absolute, friend?

David. My poor master—under favour for mentioning him first.—You know me, my lady—I am David—and

my master of course is, or *was*, 'Squire Acres.—Then comes 'Squire Faulkland. 242

Julia. Do, ma'am, let us instantly endeavour to prevent mischief.

Mrs. Mal. Oh, fie—it would be very inelegant in us: we should only participate things.

David. Ah! do, Mrs. Aunt, save a few lives—they are desperately given, believe me.—Above all, there is that blood-thirsty Philistine, Sir Lucius O'Trigger.

Mrs. Mal. Sir Lucius O'Trigger!—Oh mercy! have they drawn poor little dear Sir Lucius into the scrape?—Why, how you stand, girl! you have no more feeling than one of the Derbyshire petrifications! 253

Lydia. What are we to do, madam?

Mrs. Mal. Why, fly with the utmost felicity, to be sure, to prevent mischief!—here, friend—you can show us the place?

Fag. If you please, ma'am, I will conduct you—David, do you look for Sir Anthony. [Exit DAVID.

Mrs. Mal. Come, girls!—this gentleman will exhort us.—Come, sir, you're our envoy—lead the way, and we'll precede. 262

Fag. Not a step before the ladies for the world!

Mrs. Mal. You're sure you know the spot.

Fag. I think I can find it, ma'am; and one good thing is, we shall hear the report of the pistols as we draw near, so we can't well miss them;—never fear, ma'am, never fear. [Exeunt, he talking.

SCENE II.—*South Parade*

Enter ABSOLUTE, putting his sword under his great-coat

Abs. A sword seen in the streets of Bath would raise as great an alarm as a mad dog.—How provoking this is in Faulkland!—never punctual! I shall be obliged to go without him at last. Oh, the devil! here's Sir Anthony! —how shall I escape him?

[*Muffles up his face, and takes a circle to go off.*

Enter Sir ANTHONY

Sir Anth. How one may be deceived at a little distance! only that I see he don't know me, I could have sworn that was Jack!—Hey!—Gad's life! it is.—Why, Jack,—what are you afraid of? hey!—sure I'm right.—Why, Jack—Jack Absolute! [Goes up to him.

Abs. Really, sir, you have the advantage of me:—I don't remember ever to have had the honour—my name is Saunderson, at your service. 13

Sir Anth. Sir, I beg your pardon—I took you—hey? why, zounds! it is—Stay— [Looks up to his face. So, so—your humble servant, Mr. Saunderson!—Why, you scoundrel, what tricks are you after now?

Abs. Oh! a joke, sir, a joke!—I came here on purpose to look for you, sir.

Sir Anth. You did! well, I am glad you were so lucky: but what are you muffled up so for?—what's this for?—hey? 22

Abs. 'Tis cool, sir; isn't it?—rather chilly somehow: but I shall be late—I have a particular engagement.

Sir Anth. Stay.—Why, I thought you were looking for me?—Pray, Jack, where is't you are going?

Abs. Going, sir!

Sir Anth. Ay—where are you going?

Abs. Where am I going?

Sir Anth. You unmannerly puppy! 30

Abs. I was going, sir, to—to—to Lydia—sir, to Lydia—to make matters up if I could;—and I was looking for you, sir,—to—to—

Sir Anth. To go with you, I suppose.—Well, come along.

Abs. Oh! zounds! no, sir, not for the world!—I wished to meet with you, sir—to—to—to—You find it cool, I'm sure, sir—you'd better not stay out.

Sir Anth. Cool!—not at all—Well, Jack—and what will you say to Lydia? 40

Abs. Oh, sir, beg her pardon, humour her—promise and vow:—but I detain you, sir—consider the cold air on your gout.

Sir Anth. Oh, not at all!—not at all!—I'm in no hurry.—Ah! Jack, you youngsters, when once you are wounded here—

[Putting his hand to ABSOLUTE'S breast.
Hey! what the deuce have you got here?

Abs. Nothing, sir—nothing.

Sir Anth. What's this?—here's something damn'd hard. 50

Abs. Oh, trinkets, sir! trinkets—a bauble for Lydia!

Sir Anth. Nay, let me see your taste.

[Pulls his coat open, the sword falls.

Trinkets!—a bauble for Lydia!—Zounds! sirrah, you are not going to cut her throat, are you?

Abs. Ha ! ha ! ha !—I thought it would divert you, sir, though I didn't mean to tell you till afterwards.

Sir Anth. You didn't !—Yes, this is a very diverting trinket, truly.

Abs. Sir, I'll explain to you.—You know, sir, Lydia is romantic—dev'lish romantic, and very absurd, of course :—now, sir, I intend, if she refuses to forgive me—to unsheathe this sword—and swear—I'll fall upon its point, and expire at her feet !

63

Sir Anth. Fall upon a fiddle-stick's end !—why, I suppose it is the very thing that would please her—Get along, you fool !

Abs. Well, sir, you shall hear of my success—you shall hear.—“ Oh, Lydia !—forgive me, or this pointed steel ”—says I.

Sir Anth. “ Oh, booby ! stab away, and welcome ”—says she.—Get along !—and damn your trinkets !

71

[*Exit ABSOLUTE.*]

Enter DAVID, running

David. Stop him ! stop him ! Murder ! Thief ! Fire !—Stop fire ! Stop fire !—Oh ! Sir Anthony—call ! call ! bid 'm stop ! Murder ! Fire !

Sir Anth. Fire ! Murder ! where ?

David. Oons ! he's out of sight ! and I'm out of breath ! for my part ! Oh, Sir Anthony, why didn't you stop him ? why didn't you stop him ?

Sir Anth. Zounds ! the fellow's mad !—Stop whom ? stop Jack ?

80

David. Ay, the captain, sir !—there's murder and slaughter—

Sir Anth. Murder !

David. Ay, please you, Sir Anthony, there's all kinds of murder, all sorts of slaughter to be seen in the fields : there's fighting going on, sir—bloody sword-and-gun fighting !

Sir Anth. Who are going to fight, dunce ?

David. Everybody that I know of, Sir Anthony :—everybody is going to fight, my poor master, Sir Lucius O'Trigger, your son, the captain—

91

Sir Anth. Oh, the dog !—I see his tricks ;—do you know the place ?

David. King's Mead-fields.

Sir Anth. You know the way ?

David. Not an inch ;—but I'll call the mayor—aldermen—constables—churchwardens—and beadle— we can't be too many to part them.

Sir Anth. Come along—give me your shoulder ! we'll get assistance as we go—the lying villain !—Well, I shall be in such a frenzy—So—this was the history of his trinkets ! I'll bauble him !

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE III.—*King's Mead-fields*

Sir LUCIUS and ACRES, with pistols

Acres. By my valour ! then, Sir Lucius, forty yards is a good distance—Odds levels and aims !—I say it is a good distance.

Sir Luc. Is it for muskets or small field-pieces ? upon my conscience, Mr. Acres, you must leave those things to me.—Stay now—I'll show you.

[*Measures paces along the stage.*

There now, that is a very pretty distance—a pretty gentleman's distance.

Acres. Zounds! we might as well fight in a sentry-box! I tell you, Sir Lucius, the farther he is off, the cooler I shall take my aim. 11

Sir Luc. Faith! then I suppose you would aim at him best of all if he was out of sight!

Acres. No, Sir Lucius, but I should think forty or eight-and-thirty yards—

Sir Luc. Pho! pho! nonsense! three or four feet between the mouths of your pistols is as good as a mile.

Acres. Odds bullets, no!—by my valour! there is no merit in killing him so near: do, my dear Sir Lucius, let me bring him down at a long shot:—a long shot, Sir Lucius, if you love me! 21

Sir Luc. Well—the gentleman's friend and I must settle that.—But tell me now, Mr. Acres, in case of an accident, is there any little will or commission I could execute for you?

Acres. I am much obliged to you, Sir Lucius—but I don't understand—

Sir Luc. Why, you may think there's no being shot at without a little risk—and if an unlucky bullet should carry a quietus with it—I say it will be no time then to be bothering you about family matters. 31

Acres. A quietus!

Sir Luc. For instance, now—if that should be the case—would you choose to be pickled and sent home?—or would it be the same to you to lie here in the Abbey?—I'm told there is very snug lying in the Abbey.

Acres. Pickled!—Snug lying in the Abbey!—Odds tremors! Sir Lucius, don't talk so!

Sir Luc. I suppose, Mr. Acres, you never were engaged in an affair of this kind before? 40

Acres. No, Sir Lucius, never before.

Sir Luc. Ah! that's a pity!—there's nothing like being used to a thing.—Pray now, how would you receive the gentleman's shot?

Acres. Odds files!—I've practised that—there, Sir Lucius—there (*Puts himself in an attitude*)—a side front, hey?—Odd! I'll make myself small enough:—I'll stand edgeways.

Sir Luc. Now—you're quite out—for if you stand so when I take my aim— [Levelling at him.

Acres. Zounds! Sir Lucius—are you sure it is not cock'd? 52

Sir Luc. Never fear.

Acres. But—but—you don't know—it may go off of its own head!

Sir Luc. Pho! be easy—Well, now if I hit you in the body, my bullet has a double chance—for if it misses a vital part of your right side—'twill be very hard if it don't succeed on the left!

Acres. A vital part!

60

Sir Luc. But, there—fix yourself so—(*Placing him*)—let him see the broad-side of your full front—there—now a ball or two may pass clean through your body, and never do any harm at all.

Acres. Clean through me!—a ball or two clean through me!

Sir Luc. Ay—may they—and it is much the genteelst attitude into the bargain.

Acres. Look'ee! Sir Lucius—I'd just as lief be shot in an awkward posture as a genteel one—so, by my valour! I will stand edgeways. 71

Sir Luc. (*Looking at his watch.*) Sure they don't mean

to disappoint us—Hah!—no, faith—I think I see them coming.

Acres. Hey!—what!—coming!—

Sir Luc. Ay—Who are those yonder getting over the stile?

Acres. There are two of them indeed!—well—let them come—hey, Sir Lucius!—we—we—we—we—won’t run.

Sir Luc. Run!

80

Acres. No—I say—we won’t run, by my valour!

Sir Luc. What the devil’s the matter with you?

Acres. Nothing—nothing—my dear friend—my dear Sir Lucius—but I—I—I don’t feel quite so bold, somehow, as I did.

Sir Luc. Oh, fie!—consider your honour.

Acres. Ay—true—my honour—Do, Sir Lucius, edge in a word or two every now and then about my honour.

Sir Luc. Well, here they’re coming. [Looking.

Acres. Sir Lucius—if I wa’n’t with you, I should almost think I was afraid—if my valour should leave me!—Valour will come and go.

92

Sir Luc. Then pray keep it fast, while you have it.

Acres. Sir Lucius—I doubt it is going—yes—my valour is certainly going!—it is sneaking off!—I feel it oozing out as it were at the palms of my hands!

Sir Luc. Your honour—your honour.—Here they are.

Acres. Oh, mercy!—now—that I was safe at Clod Hall! or could be shot before I was aware!

Enter FAULKLAND and ABSOLUTE

Sir Luc. Gentlemen, your most obedient.—Hah!—what, Captain Absolute!—So, I suppose, sir, you are come here, just like myself—to do a kind office, first for

your friend—then to proceed to business on your own
account. 104

Acres. What, Jack!—my dear Jack!—my dear friend!

Abs. Hark'ee, Bob, Beverley's at hand.

Sir Luc. Well, Mr. Acres—I don't blame your saluting
the gentleman civilly.—So, Mr. Beverley (*to FAULKLAND*),
if you'll choose your weapons, the captain and I will
measure the ground. 110

Faulk. My weapons, sir!

Acres. Odds life! Sir Lucius, I'm not going to fight
Mr. Faulkland; these are my particular friends.

Sir Luc. What, sir, did not you come here to fight Mr.
Acres?

Faulk. Not I, upon my word, sir.

Sir Luc. Well, now, that's mighty provoking! But I
hope, Mr. Faulkland, as there are three of us come on
purpose for the game—you won't be so cantankerous as
to spoil the party by sitting out. 120

Abs. Oh, pray, Faulkland, fight to oblige Sir
Lucius.

Faulk. Nay, if Mr. Acres is so bent on the matter—

Acres. No, no, Mr. Faulkland—I'll bear my dis-
appointment like a Christian—Look'ee, Sir Lucius,
there's no occasion at all for me to fight; and if it is the
same to you, I'd as lief let it alone.

Sir Luc. Observe me, Mr. Acres—I must not be trifled
with. You have certainly challenged somebody—and
you came here to fight him—Now, if that gentleman is
willing to represent him—I can't see, for my soul, why it
isn't just the same thing. 132

Acres. Why no—Sir Lucius—I tell you, 'tis one
Beverley I've challenged—a fellow, you see, that dare not

show his face ! If *he* were here, I'd make him give up his pretensions directly !—

Abs. Hold, Bob—let me set you right—there is no such man as Beverley in the case.—The person who assumed that name is before you ; and as his pretensions are the same in both characters, he is ready to support them in whatever way you please. 141

Sir Luc. Well, this is lucky—Now you have an opportunity—

Acres. What, quarrel with my dear friend Jack Absolute—not if he were fifty Beverleys ! Zounds ! Sir Lucius, you would not have me so unnatural.

Sir Luc. Upon my conscience, Mr. Acres, your valour has *oozed* away with a vengeance !

Acres. Not in the least ! Odds backs and abettors ! I'll be your second with all my heart—and if you should get a *quietus*, you may command me entirely. I'll get you *snug lying* in the *Abbey here* ; or *pickle* you, and send you over to *Blunderbuss Hall*, or anything of the kind, with the greatest pleasure. 154

Sir Luc. Pho ! pho ! you are little better than a coward.

Acres. Mind, gentlemen, he calls me a *coward* ; coward was the word, by my valour !

Sir Luc. Well, sir ?

Acres. Look'ee, Sir Lucius, 'tisn't that I mind the word *coward*—*coward* may be said in joke—But if you had called me a *poltroon*, odds daggers and balls— 162

Sir Luc. Well, sir ?

Acres. —I should have thought you a very ill-bred man.

Sir Luc. Pho ! you are beneath my notice.



Capt. Absolute. Come on then, sir—(draws); . . . here's my reply.

Abs. Nay, Sir Lucius, you can't have a better second than my friend Acres—He is a most *determined dog*—called in the country, *Fighting Bob*.—He generally *kills a man a week*—don't you, Bob?

Acres. Ay—at home!—

171

Sir Luc. Well then, captain, 'tis we must begin—so come out, my little counsellor—(*draws his sword*)—and ask the gentleman, whether he will resign the lady, without forcing you to proceed against him?

Abs. Come on then, sir—(*draws*) ; since you won't let it be an amicable suit, here's my reply.

Enter Sir ANTHONY, DAVID, and the WOMEN

David. Knock 'em all down, sweet Sir Anthony ; knock down my master in particular—and bind his hands over to their good behaviour!

Sir Anth. Put up, Jack, put up, or I shall be in a frenzy—how came you in a duel, sir?

182

Abs. Faith, sir, that gentleman can tell you better than I ; 'twas he called on me, and you know, sir, I serve his Majesty.

Sir Anth. Here's a pretty fellow ! I catch him going to cut a man's throat, and he tells me, he serves his Majesty !—Zounds ! sirrah, then how durst you draw the king's sword against one of his subjects ?

Abs. Sir, I tell you ! that gentleman called me out, without explaining his reasons.

191

Sir Anth. Gad ! sir, how came you to call my son out, without explaining your reasons ?

Sir Luc. Your son, sir, insulted me in a manner which my honour could not brook.

Sir Anth. Zounds ! Jack, how durst you insult the

gentleman in a manner which his honour could not brook?

Mrs. Mal. Come, come, let's have no honour before ladies—Captain Absolute, come here—How could you intimidate us so?—Here's Lydia has been terrified to death for you. 202

Abs. For fear I should be killed, or escape, ma'am?

Mrs. Mal. Nay, no delusions to the past—Lydia is convinced; speak, child.

Sir Luc. With your leave, ma'am, I must put in a word here—I believe I could interpret the young lady's silence—Now mark—

Lydia. What is it you mean, sir?

Sir Luc. Come, come, Delia, we must be serious now—this is no time for trifling.

Lydia. 'Tis true, sir; and your reproof bids me offer this gentleman my hand, and solicit the return of his affections. 214

Abs. Oh! my little angel, say you so?—Sir Lucius—I perceive there must be some mistake here, with regard to the affront which you affirm I have given you. I can only say, that it could not have been intentional. And as you must be convinced, that I should not fear to support a real injury—you shall now see that I am not ashamed to atone for an inadvertency—I ask your pardon.—But for this lady, while honoured with her approbation, I will support my claim against any man whatever. 223

Sir Anth. Well said, Jack, and I'll stand by you, my boy.

Acres. Mind, I give up all my claim—I make no pretensions to anything in the world—and if I can't get a wife, without fighting for her, by my valour! I'll live a bachelor.

Sir Lue. Captain, give me your hand—an affront handsomely acknowledged becomes an obligation—and as for the lady—if she chooses to deny her own handwriting, here— [Takes out letters.

Mrs. Mal. Oh, he will dissolve my mystery!—Sir Lucius, perhaps there's some mistake—perhaps I can illuminate— 235

Sir Luc. Pray, old gentlewoman, don't interfere where you have no business.—Miss Languish, are you my Delia, or not?

Lydia. Indeed, Sir Lucius, I am not.

[LYDIA and ABSOLUTE walk aside.

Mrs. Mal. Sir Lucius O'Trigger—ungrateful as you are—I own the soft impeachment—pardon my blushes, I am Delia. 242

Sir Luc. You Delia—pho! pho! be easy.

Mrs. Mal. Why, thou barbarous Vandyke—those letters are mine—When you are more sensible of my benignity—perhaps I may be brought to encourage your addresses.

Sir Luc. Mrs. Malaprop, I am extremely sensible of your condescension; and whether you or Lucy have put this trick upon me, I am equally beholden to you.—And, to show you I am not ungrateful, Captain Absolute, since you have taken that lady from me, I'll give you my Delia into the bargain. 253

Abs. I am much obliged to you, Sir Lucius; but here's my friend, Fighting Bob, unprovided for.

Sir Luc. Hah! little Valour—here, will you make your fortune?

Acres. Odds wrinkles! No.—But give me your hand, Sir Lucius, forget and forgive; but if ever I give you a

chance of *pickling* me again, say Bob Acres is a dunce, that's all. 261

Sir Anth. Come, Mrs. Malaprop, don't be cast down—you are in your bloom yet.

Mrs. Mal. Oh, Sir Anthony!—men are all barbarians.

[*All retire but JULIA and FAULKLAND.*]

Julia. He seems dejected and unhappy—not sullen—there was some foundation, however, for the tale he told me—O woman! how true should be your judgment, when your resolution is so weak!

Faulk. Julia!—how can I sue for what I so little deserve? I dare not presume—yet Hope is the child of Penitence. 271

Julia. Oh! Faulkland, you have not been more faulty in your unkind treatment of me, than I am now in wanting inclination to resent it. As my heart honestly bids me place my weakness to the account of love, I should be ungenerous not to admit the same plea for yours.

Faulk. Now I shall be blest indeed! 277

[*Sir ANTHONY comes forward.*]

Sir Anth. What's going on here?—So you have been quarrelling too, I warrant.—Come, Julia, I never interfered before; but let me have a hand in the matter at last.—All the faults I have ever seen in my friend Faulkland seemed to proceed from what he calls the *delicacy* and *warmth* of his affection for you.—There, marry him directly, Julia; you'll find he'll mend surprisingly!

[*The rest come forward.*]

Sir Luc. Come now, I hope there is no dissatisfied person, but what is content; for as I have been disappointed myself, it will be very hard if I have not the satisfaction of seeing other people succeed better—

Acres. You are right, Sir Lucius.—So, Jack, I wish you joy—Mr. Faulkland the same.—Ladies,—come now, to show you I'm neither vexed nor angry, odds tabors and pipes ! I'll order the fiddles in half an hour to the New Rooms—and I insist on your all meeting me there. 294

Sir Anth. Gad ! sir, I like your spirit ; and at night we single lads will drink a health to the young couples, and a husband to Mrs. Malaprop.

Faulk. Our partners are stolen from us, Jack—I hope to be congratulated by each other—*yours* for having checked in time the errors of an ill-directed imagination, which might have betrayed an innocent heart ; and *mine*, for having, by her gentleness and candour, reformed the unhappy temper of one, who by it made wretched whom he loved most, and tortured the heart he ought to have adored. 305

Abs. Well, Faulkland, we have both tasted the bitters, as well as the sweets, of love—with this difference only, that *you* always prepared the bitter cup for yourself, while *I*—

Lydia. Was always obliged to *me* for it, hey ! Mr. Modesty ?—But come, no more of that—our happiness is now as unalloyed as general. 312

Julia. Then let us study to preserve it so : and while Hope pictures to us a flattering scene of future bliss, let us deny its pencil those colours which are too bright to be lasting.—When hearts deserving happiness would unite their fortunes, Virtue would crown them with an unfading garland of modest hurtless flowers ; but ill-judging Passion will force the gaudier rose into the wreath, whose thorn offends them, when its leaves are dropt !

EPILOGUE

BY THE AUTHOR

SPOKEN BY MRS. BULKLEY

LADIES, for *you*—I heard our poet say—
He'd try to coax some *moral* from his play :
“ One moral's plain,” cried I, “ without more fuss ;
Man's social happiness all rests on us :
Through all the drama—whether *damn'd* or not—
Love gilds the *scene*, and *women* guide the *plot*.
From every rank obedience is our due—
D'ye doubt ?—The world's great stage shall prove it true.”

The Cit, well skill'd to shun domestic strife,
Will sup abroad ;—but first, he'll ask his *wife* : 10
John Trot, his friend, for once will do the same,
But then—he'll just *step home to tell his dame*.

The *surly Squire* at noon resolves to rule,
And half the day—Zounds !—Madam is a fool !
Convinced at night, the vanquish'd victor says,
Ah, Kate ! you women have such coaxing ways !

The *jolly Toper* chides each tardy blade,
Till reeling Bacchus calls on *Love* for aid :
Then with each toast he sees fair bumpers swim,
And kisses *Chloe* on the sparkling brim ! 20

Nay, I have heard that Statesmen—great and wise—
Will *sometimes* counsel with a lady's eyes ;
The servile suitors watch her various face,
She *smiles* preferment, or she *frowns* disgrace,
Curtsies a pension here—there nods a place.

Nor with less awe, in scenes of humbler life,
Is *view'd* the *mistress*, or is *heard* the *wife*.
The poorest Peasant of the poorest soil,
The child of poverty, and heir to toil,
Early from radiant Love's impartial light 30
Steals one small spark to cheer his world of night :
Dear spark ! that oft through winter's chilling woes
Is all the warmth his little cottage knows !

The wand'ring *Tar*, who not for *years* has press'd
The widow'd partner of his *day* of rest,
On the cold deck, far from her arms removed,
Still hums the ditty which his *Susan* loved ;
And while around the cadence rude is blown,
The boatswain whistles in a softer tone. 40

The *Soldier*, fairly proud of wounds and toil,
Pants for the *triumph* of his *Nancy*'s smile ;
But ere the battle should he list' her cries,
The lover trembles—and the hero dies !
That heart, by war and honour steel'd to fear,
Droops on a sigh, and sickens at a tear !

But ye more cautious, ye nice-judging few,
Who give to Beauty only Beauty's due,
Though friends to Love—*ye* view with deep regret
Our conquests marr'd, our triumphs incomplete,
Till polish'd Wit more lasting charms disclose, 50
And Judgment fix the darts which Beauty throws.
—In female breasts did sense and merit rule,
The lover's mind would ask no other school ;
Shamed into sense, the scholars of our eyes,
Our beaux from *gallantry* would soon be wise ;
Would gladly light, their homage to improve,
The lamp of Knowledge at the torch of Love !

NOTES

As so large a proportion of the notes on this play must have to do with Mrs. Malaprop's conversation, these have been placed for convenience under a separate heading.

PROLOGUE.

L. 11. Some sons of Phoebus. Poets. Cf. *The School for Scandal*, Act II, Scene 2, where Joseph Surface calls Sir Benjamin Backbite "a very Phoebus," after the latter has recited his epigram. Phoebus was the god of song.

L. 12. In the Fleet. A pun on the debtors' prison, situate by the side of the river Fleet, now covered over. The possibilities for a pun in this word offered endless delight to the dramatists of the age.

L. 29. Damn'd in equity. "When really guilty, escape on some technical legal flaw in the suit" (Nettleton).

L. 31. Drury Lane. As Covent Garden and Drury Lane were the only theatres at which the spoken drama could legally be presented, the use of the name of one of them symbolises "the theatre." Both these houses were in the same neighbourhood.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Mr. Shuter played the part of Croaker in Goldsmith's first play, *The Good-Natured Man*, which was produced at Covent Garden in 1768. The success of the comedy was really due to his performance, and he took the important part of Mr. Hardcastle in *She Stoops to Conquer*, five years later.

Mr. Woodward, who was Lofty in *The Good-Natured Man*, refused the part of Tony in *She Stoops to Conquer*, and only spoke the Prologue. He died in 1777.

Mr. Quick was Tony upon Woodward's refusal, though he had only been the postboy in the earlier play.

Mr. Lee Lewes was young Marlow in *She Stoops to Conquer*, having only previously been Harlequin.

Mrs. Green had acted in both Goldsmith's plays, as Garnet and Mrs. Hardecastle. She appeared as Ophelia in Garrick's first season at Goodman's Fields.

Mrs. Bulkley had had the leading woman's rôles in Goldsmith's plays. She was unable to sing, and Goldsmith put up with much bother over the Epilogue to *She Stoops to Conquer* on this score, because he was grateful to her for her performance in his first play.

ACT I. SCENE 1.

L. 41. Jupiter. The god, becoming enamoured of Europa, daughter of the Phoenician King, took the guise of a bull in order to be near her, and when, encouraged by his tameness, she mounted on his back, ran off with her.

L. 57. Thread-papers. For rolling up skeins of silk or thread. They were NOT curling papers.

L. 70. Mort. A dialect word for "quantity."

L. 85. Ton. The following definition of *ton*, from Colman's *Jealous Wife*, seems apposite: "The Chief Aim of the Bon Ton is to render Persons of Family different from the Vulgar, for whom indeed Nature serves very well."

L. 96. thoff: though.

L. 97. Carrots: "natural head of reddish-yellow hair" (Nettleton).

L. 111. Gyde's Porch. At this time Mr. Gyde kept the Lower Rooms, which according to *The New Prose Bath Guide* (1778) had "from their situation, some advantage of the upper, particularly a good garden and a retired walk on the margin of the river." Bull's circulating library was opposite them. They were burnt down on December 21, 1820.

SCENE 2.

L. 2. Circulating library. These were very popular in Bath, and details of them will be found in the Introduction, in the section headed "Bath in the Eighteenth Century."

L. 4. And could not you get. Lydia Languish's fiction has been identified as follows: two, *The Mistakes of the Heart* and *The Tears of Sensibility*, were translations from the French published in 1773. *The Memoirs of a Lady of Quality* had appeared twenty-two years before in Smollett's *Peregrine Pickle*; his *Humphrey Clinker* was published in 1771. Sterne wrote *The Sentimental Journey* (1768). *The Delicate Distress* and *The Gordian Knot* were both new books. *The Innocent Adultery* is the sub-title to Southerne's tragedy, *The Fatal Marriage*. The author of *The Whole Duty of Man* is thought to have been Dr. Allestree, who was once Provost of Eton. *The Man of Feeling* was written by Mackenzie.

and published in 1771. Mrs. Chapone wrote *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind* (1773), and Dr. James Fordyce *Sermons to Young Women* (1765) and *The Character and Conduct of the Female Sex* (1776).

L. 34. **Blonds.** Blond laces, produced from unbleached linen.

L. 340. **Padusoy.** A strong, corded silk fabric, named from Padua and the French *soie*. The word is used by Fielding, Gray, and Richardson.

ACT II. SCENE 1.

L. 169. **The German Spa.** Spa was a foreign health resort. Its waters drew all nationalities, and the name has been taken by similar places on account of the reputation.

L. 185. **Good apartments, Jack.** Acres, looking about his friend's rooms, seeks to tide over an awkward moment.

L. 214. **Squallante, rumblante, and quiverante.** This is Acres' adaptation of musical jargon to express what he felt when listening. It is easy to see that he must have jarred upon Lydia's "sensibility."

L. 220. **Music the food of love.** The opening of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*.

L. 227. **When absent from my soul's delight.** The song whose title most nearly approaches this is "When absent from the Nymph I love," in *Calliope*, 1788.

L. 230. **Go, gentle gales.** The refrain from *The Faithful Lover* given in *Clio and Euterpe* or *British Harmony*, 1762.

L. 233. **My heart's my own.** This song was sung by Rosetta in Bickerstaffe's *Love in a Village*.

L. 290. **Looby. Lubber.**

L. 308. **Frogs and tambours.** Frogs were ornamented braided loops, to secure greatcoats. Tambours were frames on which silks were stretched to be embroidered.

L. 446. **Cox's Museum.** James Cox was a jeweller of 103 Shoe Lane, who in 1773 and 1774 opened at Spring Gardens an exhibition of 56 mechanical toys and curiosities, for which he charged half-a-guinea for admission. The collection was valued at £197,500, and there is in the British Museum a Descriptive Inventory made when he disposed of it by lottery. Fanny Burney mentions it in *Evelina*, letter 19.

SCENE 2.

L. 14. **The South Parade.** See Epistle IX, *The New Bath Guide*:

"O the charming Parties made,
Some to walk the South Parade."

L. 20. **The Parade Coffee-house.** This was on the North Parade.

L. 40. **Delia.** It had long been fashionable to conduct one's romances under an assumed name; Delia and Celia were the most popular for this purpose.

The notes on this letter will be found among the Sayings of Mrs. Malaprop.

L. 52. **Habeas corpus.** The right of *habeas corpus*, that one could not be kept indefinitely in prison without a trial, was laid down in *Magna Carta*. Disregarded by Charles I, it was confirmed in the Petition of Right (1632) and guarded with strict penalties in the Act of 1679.

ACT III. SCENE 1.

L. 103. **Anchorite. Hermit.** Sheridan uses this somewhat rare word again in *The School for Scandal*, IV, iii, and explains it.

L. 124. **Promethean.** Prometheus, helped by Minerva, lit his torch at the chariot of the sun, and so brought fire to earth.

SCENE 4.

L. 4. **The Devon monkerony.** David means "macaroni," the contemporary name for fops. It was customary to have caricatures of the well-known macaronis on sale in the print-shops.

L. 19. **Balancing, chasing, and boring.** The correct terms are "balancer, chasser, faire de pas de Bourrée." The Bourrée is still danced, with local variations, in Auvergne.

L. 33. **Allemandes.** A dance of moderate rapidity, in common time.

L. 38. **Anti-Gallicau.** This calls to mind the *Wasps* of Aristophanes, where an old man, asked to put on a Lacedæmonian boot, says that one of his toes is sworn enemy to Lacedæmonia.

L. 46. **Cupid's Jack-a-lantern.** The will-o'-the-wisp, a marsh gas which, dancing before travellers, led them on, thinking they saw the lights of a house, into the depths of the marsh. Cupid is likened to the will-o'-the-wisp in his activities.

L. 67. **We wear no swords here.** See note to *A sword seen in the streets of Bath*, Act V, Scene 2.

L. 134. **King's-Mead-fields.** On the west side of the city, land originally part of the royal demesne.

ACT IV. SCENE 1.

L. 85. **Dastardly, croaking raven.** The raven was considered a bird of ill omen if it alighted on a house: cf. *Troilus and Cressida*.

V. i. 191. "Would I could meet that rogue Diomed! I would croak like a raven; I would bode, I would bode"; and the last verse of the song with which *The Two Noble Kinsmen* begins.

SCENE 2.

L. 15. Hesperian curls. The explanation of this misquoted passage from *Hamlet* will be found among the Sayings of Mrs. Malaprop.

L. 115. Bedlam was the familiar name of the hospital of St. Mary of Bethlehem for lunatics, in St. George's Fields.

L. 184. Sir! A rebuke for calling her by her Christian name. She implies that she does not know this Absolute, only Beverley, and he is Beverley no longer.

SCENE 3.

L. 54. Spring Gardens. "Which considering their contiguity to so great a city are very delightful and afford, to all Conditions of People, a very rational amusement." A feature of these gardens were the public breakfasts, at which a band played. There is a vivacious account of one of these functions in Epistle XIII of *The New Bath Guide* (1766):

"... He carried us all to a Place cross the River,
And vowed that the Rooms were too hot for his Liver.
He said it would greatly our pleasure promote
If we all for Spring Gardens set out in a boat.

The Company made a most brilliant Appearance
And Ate Bread and Butter with great Perseverance.
All the Chocolate, too, that my Lord set before 'em
The Ladies dispatched with the utmost Decorum.

Some few insignificant Folk went away,
Just to follow th' Employments and Calls of the Day;
But those who knew better their Time how to spend
The Fiddling and Dancing all chose to attend."

L. 132. "Not unsought be won." An adaptation from Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book VIII, l. 503, "That would be wooed and not unsought be won."

ACT 5. SCENE 1.

L. 9. You see before you a wretch. It was pointed out by Moore that the idea of this test is to be found in Prior's *Nut-Brown*

Maid. But there, the maid was perfectly happy when the trick was confessed.

L. 154. *Is it not provoking?* See Steele's *Tender Husband*. "It looks so ordinary to go out at a door to be married. Indeed I ought to be taken out of a window and run away with."

L. 156. *A mere Smithfield bargain.* A very doubtful one, the sellers at this market having a reputation for getting the better of their customers.

L. 159. *Scotch parson.* This refers to the "Trips to Scotland" that used to be very popular with oppressed lovers, because all that was required in Scotland of people marrying was a mutual declaration of their willingness.

SCENE 2.

L. 1. *A sword seen in the streets of Bath.* Beau Nash, during his régime in Bath, prohibited the wearing of swords, so as to discourage duelling. Dr. Oliver, in his epitaph on Nash, says: "He kept men in order by prohibiting the wearing of swords in his dominions, by which means he prevented sudden passion from causing the bitterness of unavailing repentance." And Goldsmith, in his Life of Beau Nash, wrote: "To use his own expression, he was resolved to hinder people doing what they had no mind to, but for some time without effect."

Whenever Nash heard of a challenge given or accepted, he instantly had both parties arrested. But it may be supposed that frequently the place was merely shifted to somewhere outside the city boundaries. A duel fought in the Grove between two notorious gamblers gave him his chance to make a law against swords.

SCENE 3.

L. 36. *Snug lying in the Abbey.* *The New Prose Bath Guide* gives the following description of the sanitary condition of the Abbey at Bath: "The vast Number of Bodies buried within the Church, and *near the surface*, and the Frequency of the Ground being opened, before the Effect of Putrefaction is over, the Doors and Windows not being sufficiently or constantly kept open, renders the confined Air perceptibly disagreeable on first entering the Church. . . . It is very certain that a great many of the Priests and Attendants on Funeral rites at Paris are lost every year by Putrid Fevers. . . . It will be said, we are aware, that a great many People constantly attend Divine Service every Day of the week, at the Abbey Church, without finding any injury. This we admit, but so does a great Number of Turks, who mix with the Dead and Living in the very Centre of the Plague when that Disorder rages furiously at Constantinople. The malignant

sore throat is not very uncommon at Bath, and who can say from what Source of Corruption it arises ? ” The *Guide* then goes on to give a list of churches to be preferred.

L. 293. **The New Rooms.** These were in the Upper Town, near the Circus, and were opened in 1771. The inhabitants in that part of Bath had the reputation of keeping aloof.

THE EPILOGUE.

L. 11. John Trot. This was a common phrase for an awkward person. Lord Chesterfield made it familiar in his *Letters*. A far better example of Sheridan’s skill as a versifier is in the epilogue he wrote in 1779 to Hannah More’s *Fatal Falsehood*, where he draws this picture of an authoress :

“ In studious deshabille behold her sit,
A lettered gossip and a housewife wit ;
At once invoking, though for different views,
Her gods, her cook, her milliner, and muse.

A scene she now projects, and now a dish,
Here’s ‘ act the first’—and here—‘ remove the Fish’—
Now while this eye in a fine frenzy rolls,
That, soberly, casts up a bill for coals.”

THE SAYINGS OF MRS. MALAPROP

THE following is a list of Mrs. Malaprop's most important mistakes. The majority of these are cases of similar sound and wrong prefix or suffix. Occasionally, however, she drags in a word that has no bearing on the subject and is merely used because it sounds well with one or two others. Such words, as well as the more obvious of her mistakes, have not been noted. The rest have been tabulated as they occur in the text.

ACT I. SCENE 2.

illiterate : obliterate.	supercilious : superficial.
extirpate : exonerate, or exculpate.	geometry : geography.
controvertible : incontrovertible.	contagious : contiguous.
intricate : obstinate.	orthodoxy : orthography.
misanthropy : misanthrope.	reprehend : comprehend.
laconically : ironically.	superstitious : superfluous.
progeny : prodigy.	invocations : protestations.
simony : ciphering.	ineligible : ineligible.
fluxions : fractions.	intuition : tuition.
ingenuity : ingenuousness.	malevolence : benevolence.
	locality : loquacity.

ACT II. SCENE 2. (The letter to Sir Lucius).

incentive : instinctive.	commotion : emotion.
induction : seductive power.	superfluous : superficial. *
domestic combination : domestic intercourse.	punctuation : punctiliousness.
	infallible : ineffable.

ACT III.

accommodation : recommendation.	decline : reject.
ingenuity : ingenuousness.	hydrostatics : hysterics.
ineffectual : intellectual.	interceded : intercepted.
pine-apple : pinnacle.	oracular : vernacular.
exploded : exposed.	derangement : arrangement.
conjunctions : injunctions.	epitaphs : epithets.
preposition : proposition.	allegory : alligator.

ACT IV. SCENE 2.

caparisons : comparisons.

alacrity and adulation : she perhaps means "affability and animation."

physiognomy : phraseology.

Hesperian curls : This is an unintentional parody on *Hamlet*, Act III., Scene 4 : "Hyperion's curls ; the front of Jove himself ;

An eye like Mars, to threaten and command ;

A station like the herald Mercury,

New-lighted on a heaven-kissing hill."

affluence : influence.

compilation : appellation.

anticipate ; retrospection :

She means, "Don't let us call up the past ; let us look forward to the future." But what she says is, "We will not take the past before it comes ; we will look back to the future."

analysed : paralysed.

Cerberus : was actually a dog with three heads. It guarded the entrance to Hades.

ACT V. SCENE 1.

paracide : a mistake for "paricide," which again, as it means the murder of a father, was perhaps not what Mrs. Malaprop meant.

simulation : perhaps for disimulation, in the sense of "disguise."

antistrophe : catastrophe.

enveloped : she is thinking of developed, but means divulged.

perpendiculars : particulars.

participate : precipitate.

petrifactions : this is probably a printer's error, as it is the right

word, and Mrs. Malaprop was more likely to say "petrifactions," unless we admit she may occasionally have been right by accident. The "Derbyshire petrifactions" are the stalagmites and stalactites in the limestone caverns of the Peak District.

felicity : velocity.

exhort : escort.

envoy : convoy.

precede : proceed ; unless she really means "follow," when she says "go before."

ACT V. SCENE 3.

delusions : allusions.

dissolve : resolve.

illuminate : elucidate.

Vandyke : vandal.

Sheridan perhaps overdid this trick of misusing words, and certainly Mrs. Malaprop has received too much attention because of it, but it may be noticed that many of her mistakes, such as her choice of the words "locality," "oracular," and "malevolence," result in a dramatic irony that is wholly amusing.

QUESTIONS

1. "Female punctuation forbids me to say more." What other impediments prevented Mrs. Malaprop from being, as she might say, fully articled and apprehensive in her communications?

2. Who says, of whom?

"A little red-haired girl";
"A slave of fretfulness and whim";
"Old weather-beaten she-dragon";
"The Devon monkerony";
"A very negligent wooer";
"A concealed skulking rival."

3. What stumbling-blocks are put in the way of Absolute's wooing of Lydia Languish?

4. What part do the following play in the unwinding of the plot?—Fag, Bob Acres, David, Ensign Beverley, Lucy, Beau Nash, John Trot.

5. Give the context of:

"Why, sirrah, you're an anchorite";
"I am happy in the appellation";
"Indite, I say indite";
"You are indeed an eccentric planet";
"I am myself the only dupe at last";
"Our happiness is now as unalloyed as general";
"I have been very ill-used, Sir Lucius";
"A little less simplicity with a grain or two more sincerity, if you please."

6. Write notes on: damned in equity, thread-papers, frogs, Cox, be cried three times in a country church, a sword seen in the streets of Bath, very snug lying in the Abbey, circulating library, extirpate, Vandyke, Gyde's Porch, damns have had their day, New Rooms, locality, Spring Gardens, raven.

7. Who were "the rivals," and with whom were they in rivalry?

SUBJECTS FOR SHORT ESSAYS

1. What, from your reading of this and other plays, do you think a representative selection of "the flimsy furniture of a country miss's brain"?
2. Sketch the play as you think it would be if Lydia were to marry Faulkland, and Julia wedded Absolute. Do you think these couples suited?
3. "Let's have no honour before ladies." Was there very much in the eighteenth century?
4. Write a short dialogue between Mrs. Malaprop and Bob Acres on the kind of girl he should marry.
5. What devices are employed to inform the audience quickly of the main characteristics of any two persons in the play?
6. Write a short essay on the theatre of the time, with special reference to the importance of Sheridan.
7. Describe a day in the life of Lydia Languish.

HELPS TO FURTHER STUDY

1. There is a good introduction and brief life of Sheridan by Henry Morley in his edition of the plays, published by Routledge. This gives general knowledge, which can be worked up by reference to the longer biographies. Brander Matthews and G. H. Nettleton both have reliable introductions to their editions, and their notes have been used by most subsequent editors, including the present.

2. Professor Saintsbury's chapter on "Eighteenth-Century Drama" in *A Short History of English Literature* should be read, whatever else is neglected. Ashley Dukes's *Drama* in the "Home University Library" is concise and clear, besides containing a list of books on the theatre.

These can be supplemented by :

Shakespeare to Sheridan. By A. Thaler. Oxford University Press.

Sheridan to Robertson. By E. B. Watson. Harvard University Press.

Late XVIII Century Drama (1750-1800). By Allardyce Nicoll. Cambridge. Professor Nicoll has also written a book, published by Harrap, on *The Development of the Theatre*. The eighteenth-century section has many illustrations of the theatres and settings of the time and is particularly valuable for its information on stage-practice. Goldsmith has written on the eighteenth-century theatre in letter 79 of the *Citizen of the World*, and there is an essay on "Sentimental Comedy" among his works.

3. The most widely quoted contemporary accounts of Bath are *The New Prose Bath Guide* (1778) and Anstey's *New Bath Guide* (1776), a series of Poetical Epistles. This latter is still quite easy to come by, the editor having himself recently bought a copy of the second edition in Charing Cross Road for two shillings. Other books are Peach's *Historic Houses in Bath* and his *Street-Lore of Bath*, and Earle's *A Guide to the Knowledge of Bath* (1864). A modern work is *The Eighteenth-Century Architecture of Bath*, by Mowbray A. Green (Bath : Gregory, 1904). Fanny Burney, Walpole, and Smollett in *Humphrey Clinker*, give a picture of Bath

as it was in Sheridan's time, and Goldsmith wrote a charming *Life of Beau Nash*.

For more general ideas of the life of the century, use should be made of Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, and Horace Walpole's *Letters*, both of which books are published in the Everyman Library. In *The Collected Papers of W. P. Ker* (volume 1) there is a paper on the Eighteenth Century, giving the general trend of thought and expression, and H. D. Traill's *Social England* gives a detailed account of the period.

4. Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* may well be read along with *The Rivals*. Many of its scenes are laid in Bath, and there are frequent allusions to the sentimental novels of the period.

5. The best edition of Sheridan's plays will be that of R. Crompton Rhodes. The only authentic text at present is Mr Iolo Williams's, published by Herbert Jenkins.